4 FREE GIFTS

3 DIGITAL BOOKAZINES
EXCLUSIVE 11-HOUR PLAYLIST

METAL HAMMER

MAIDEN?
METALLICA?
BABYMETAL?!

THE 50
GREATEST METAL BANDS EVER

AS VOTED FOR BY YOU!

LAMB OF GOD

HATE THREE THINGS: SCREAMING, NAZIS ...AND SWEARING AT MUMS

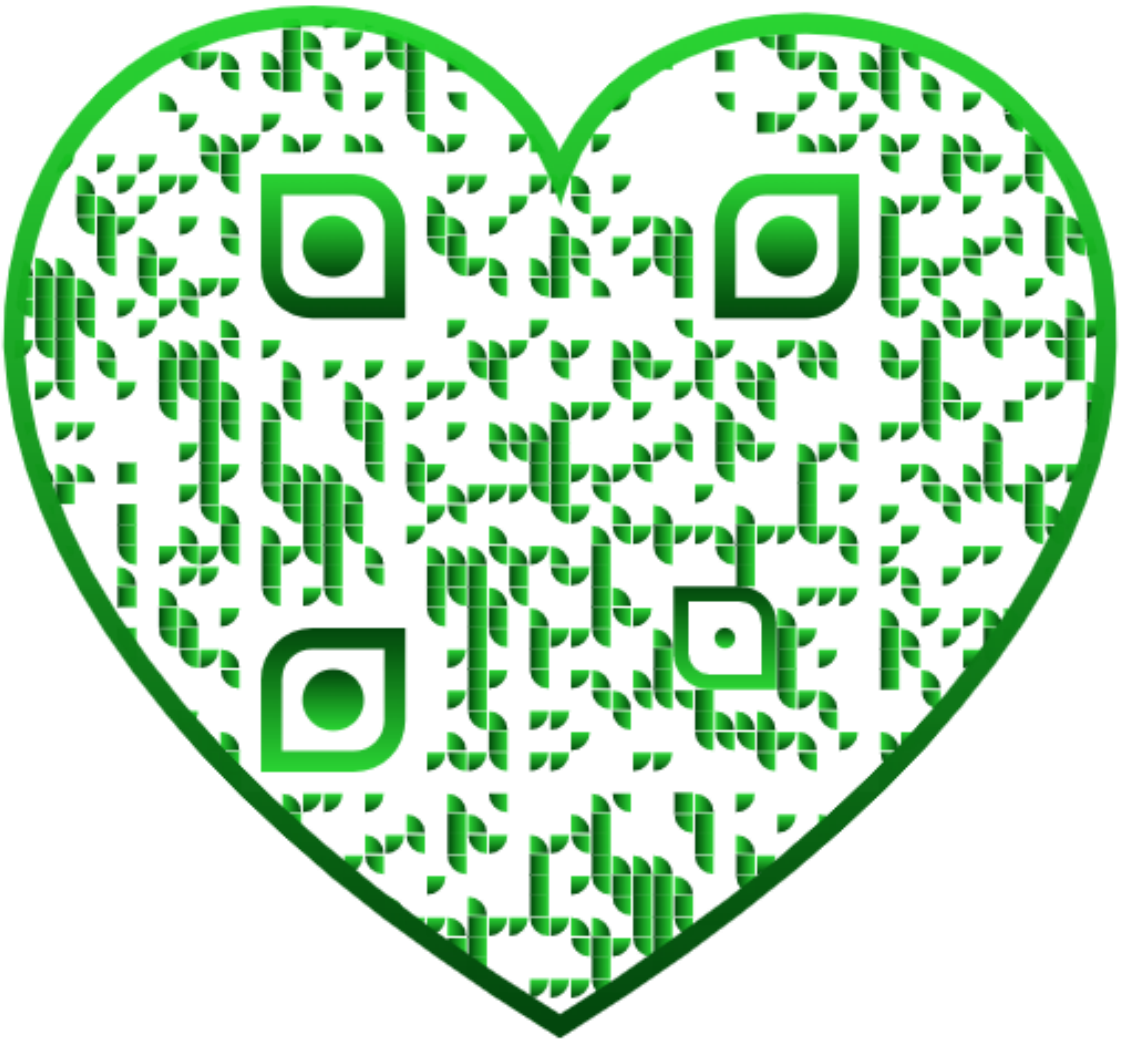
DIO
A legend remembered, 10 years on

NERGAL
Dissident or d*ckhead? The real Adam Darski

KORN
Could Head beat up Jim Root?

ICE T
Nudity! Pimp cups! At home with an original gangster

FUTURE
ISSUE 335



130
BANDS
5 STAGES
4 DAYS

BRUTAL ASSAULT

AUG 5-8, 2020

FORTRESS JOSEFOV, CZ

Mercyful Fate

AS I LAY DYING

CRADLE OF FILTH

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& THE ILLEGALS
PERFORM A VULGAR DISPLAY OF
PANTERA

DEVIN TOWNSEND

STATIC-X

OBITUARY

1914 ✦ ABBATH ✦ THE AGONIST ✦ ALCEST ✦ ARCTURUS ✦ ASPHYX ✦ ATARI TEENAGE RIOT
AUTHOR & PUNISHER ✦ BAEST ✦ BELL WITCH + AERIAL RUIN ✦ BENIGHTED
BEYOND CREATION ✦ BIRDS IN ROW ✦ BLOOD INCANTATION ✦ BLOODBATH ✦ BRUTUS
BUTCHER BABIES ✦ CATTLE DECAPITATION ✦ DARK FUNERAL ✦ DARKEST HOUR
DEATH BY STEREO ✦ DENIAL OF GOD ✦ DESPISED ICON ✦ DRACONIS INFERNUM ✦ EVOKEN
EXCREMENTORY GRINDFUCKERS ✦ EXHORDER ✦ EXHUMED ✦ FEVER 333
FLESHGOD APOCALYPSE ✦ FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY ✦ FRONTIERER ✦ FUELED BY FIRE
GAAHLS WYRD ✦ GATECREEPER ✦ GOD MOTHER ✦ HAVOK ✦ HENTAI CORPORATION
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LAST FRANK´S CZ SHOW
TOXIC HOLOCAUST ✦ UADA ✦ VADER ✦ VALKYRJA ✦ VENOM ✦ VITRIOL ✦ VOICES
VOLA ✦ WHILE SHE SLEEPS ✦ WOLVES IN THE THRONE ROOM ✦ WORMROT

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METAL HAMMER

Future PLC, 1-10 Praed Mews, Paddington, London, W2 1QY
Web: www.metalhammer.com
Letters: metalhammer@futurenet.com

Editorial
Editor **Merlin Alderslade**
merlin.alderslade@futurenet.com
Deputy Editor **Eleanor Goodman**
eleanor.goodman@futurenet.com
Production Editor **Vanessa Thorpe**
vanessa.thorpe@futurenet.com
Reviews Editor **Jonathan Selzer**
jonathan.selzer@futurenet.com
Art Editor **Louise Brock**
louise.brock@futurenet.com
Online Editor **Alice Pattillo**
alice.pattillo@futurenet.com
Online News Editor **Scott Munro**
scott.munro@futurenet.com
Content Director – Music **Scott Rowley**

Contributors
Emmie Bielby, Dean Brown, Cheryl Carter, Richard Chamberlain, Chris Chantler, Alec Chillingworth, Toby Cook, Ali Cooper, Joe Daly, Alex Deller, Malcolm Dome, John Doran, Dave Everley, Jerry Ewing, Paris Fawcett, Connie Gordon, Stephen Hill, Emma Johnston, Dom Lawson, Dannii Leivers, Dave Ling, Sophie Maughan, Edwin McFee, Chris McGarel, Ken McIntyre, Joel McIver, Tom O'Boyle, Dayal Patterson, Greg Prato, Adam Rees, Alastair Riddell, Natasha Scharf, Nick Thorpe, James Weaver, Christina Wenig, Jon Wiederhorn, Holly Wright, Nik Young

Cover images: Nick Fancher
Image Manipulation: Gary Stuckey
Art card: Luke Preece

Photography
Ben Bentley, Justin Borucki, Derek Bremner, Steve Brown, Janson Bulpin, Stephanie Cabral, Duncan Everson, Nick Fancher, Mick Hutson, Will Ireland, Simon Kallas, Tina Korhonen, Marie Korner, John McMurtrie, Kevin Nixon, Jake Owens, Tom Russell, Jeremy Saffer, Ester Segarra, James Sharrock, Travis Shinn, Frank White, Dani Wilgress, Neil Zlozower
All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Commercial Manager – Louder brands **Kate Colgan**
kate.colgan@futurenet.com
Account Director **Olly Papierowski**
olly.papierowski@futurenet.com
Account Director **Helen Hughes**
helen.hughes@futurenet.com

International Licensing
Metal Hammer is available for licensing. Contact the Licensing team to discuss partnership opportunities.
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com

Subscriptions
Email enquiries **contact@myfavouritemagazines.co.uk**
UK orderline & enquiries **0344 848 2852**
Overseas order line and enquiries **+44 344 848 2852**
Online orders & enquiries **www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk**
Head of subscriptions **Sharon Todd**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
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WE LIVE IN STRANGE TIMES

WE'D BARELY PUT the finishing touches on last month's Dave Mustaine issue when the coronavirus pandemic began to ramp up and throw the entire music industry into a state of flux. Since then, we've seen countless tours and festivals cancelled, club nights shut down, album releases delayed and much more. It's a time of confusion and uncertainty in our world, as we all, together, try to work out what comes next.

But there is positivity to be found within the chaos. Whether it's Code Orange live streaming an empty show in a fascinating new way or Trivium leading the charge on Twitch, the metal scene is once again proving what we've always known: that we thrive in times of difficulty, and that we should be leading the way when it comes to innovation and evolution.

And speaking of evolution, please welcome the new-look and newly inspired Lamb Of God back to the cover of *Metal Hammer*. With a tweaked line-up and a hunger to take on the world's injustices first-hand, they remain as passionate and fired up as ever, and I hope Kim Kelly's fantastic interview with frontman Randy Blythe will provide you with some comfort and inspiration in this uncertain climate.

Keep strong and look out for each other. There is light at the end of this tunnel, I promise you.

HORNS UP

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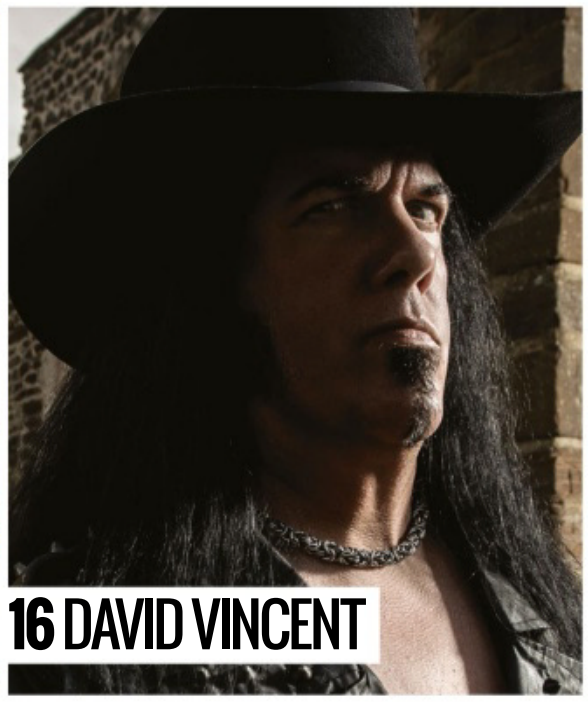
MEET THE BAND

KIM KELLY
WRITER
Kim flew over to Virginia a few weeks back to talk music, politics and what comes next for Lamb Of God with their talismanic frontman, Randy Blythe. It marks her very first *Metal Hammer* cover feature, so give her a (distant) salute the next time you see her.

NICK FANCHER
PHOTOGRAPHER
We knew we wanted a slightly different-looking Lamb Of God shoot to what people are used to, and we knew just the man for the job. Enter Ohio resident Nick for his first shoot with *Hammer*! We think he did a rather splendid job, don't you? We'll have him back.

RICH HOBSON
WRITER
This issue, Rich is introducing us to the excellent Irist, who look set to be one of this year's most exciting young names, and spent five whole minutes in the company of In Flames' Anders Fridén. Okay, maybe it was a bit longer. Don't spoil the illusion, alright?

36 LAMB OF GOD



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Head to p.34 for details

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HOW TO GET YOUR FOUR FREE GIFTS!

IN THIS ISSUE OF *Metal Hammer*, we're giving away four exclusive free gifts! As well as three digital bookazines boasting hundreds of pages of exclusive features and interviews, we've also curated a playlist featuring every single band in this magazine. That's right. Every. Single. One.*

To download your free bookazines – *The Story Of Metal Vol.1*, *The Story Of Nirvana* and *The 100 Greatest Rock Albums Of All Time*, simply head to **tinyurl.com/Hammer335Gifts** and enter your email address. All three titles will be emailed straight to you ready to download to your device of choice.

To get hold of your exclusive issue playlist, all you have to do is go to **tinyurl.com/Hammer335Playlist** and play it loud. That's it! Enjoy, and thanks as always for your support.

*Except the ones that aren't on streaming. You know the types. We're looking at you, Duivel.

THE BIG PICTURE

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

LAST MONTH, VILLE Valo stunned the metal world by surprise-releasing a trio of new songs under the moniker 'VV', rebranding HIM's social media pages as 'Heartagram' and revealing a new-look version of said famous symbol in the process. Musically, the new tracks sound suspiciously like his old day job, prompting many fans to speculate whether this was effectively a soft HIM reboot.

This previously unreleased shot by John McMurtrie was taken during the cover shoot for our blockbuster farewell feature with Ville as he disbanded HIM for good (or so it seemed…) in late 2017. Shot at East London's Murder Mile studios, we found Ville in contemplative mood as he prepared to bid farewell to his life's work.

"It's not unusual for a frontman to have charisma but Ville is different," says John. "He has an aura about him that energises anyone in his company. He is also immediately disarming! No ego, no tantrums and 100% into every shoot I have ever had the pleasure of doing with him!" H

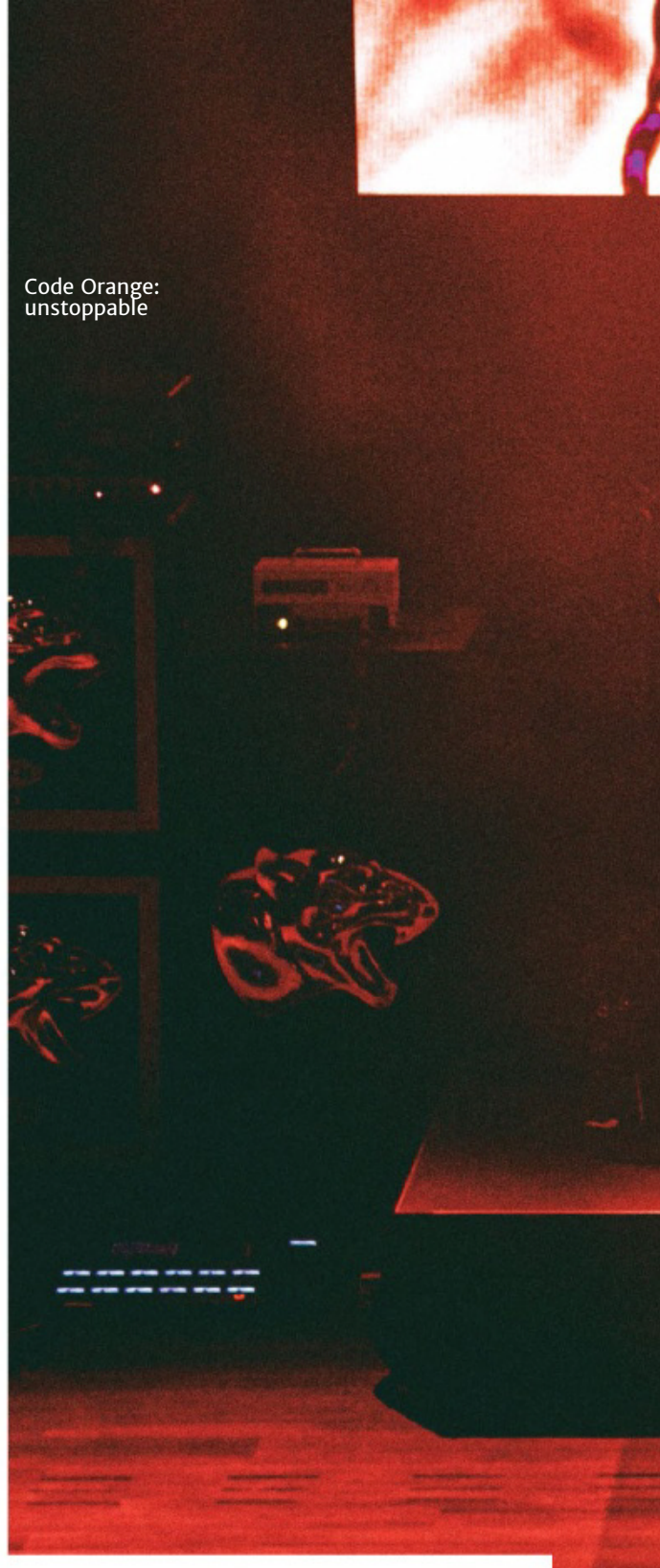
JOHN McMURTRIE

THE HOT TOPIC

COVID-19: METAL STRIKES BACK

In the midst of all the coronavirus chaos, the metal scene united to keep moving forward

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE



Code Orange: unstoppable

EVEN AS THE likes of Testament, Exodus and Lacuna Coil began to pull shows in Italy at the end of February, few in the music industry could have truly predicted just how huge an impact the coronavirus pandemic would have on our world. As shows and tours began to be postponed or cancelled left, right and centre over the month that followed, it was increasingly clear that we were set to face a prolonged period of difficulty that would leave many bands, festivals and associated businesses reeling.

Once Glastonbury officially cancelled on March 18, it seemed inevitable that Download – a festival of comparable size and due to take place two weeks earlier – would follow suit. Sure enough, on March 26, it was official. "This decision hasn't been taken lightly and we're beyond disappointed. We extend our heartfelt apologies to all of you – we really did try to make this work," said the festival in its statement. "Please rest assured we will be back next year. Now, more than ever, we need the Download spirit to thrive and offer support to those that need it most. We'll do our best to put together an amazing line-up for you in 2021 and can't wait to see you all then."

More festivals followed. Venues had to close. Album plans, too, were thrown into a state of flux. The likes of Bury Tomorrow and Enslaved had to postpone album releases as bands around the world were forced to join the rest of us in isolated lockdown. Spring and, at the very least, early summer were effectively cancelled. On the face of it, music was in big trouble – not least of all metal, whose very existence relies on grass roots movements from independent bands.

Except, something else happened. Instead of wallowing in misery or retreating into the shadows, metal stood up. Suddenly, countless bands were coming forward with new ways to reach their fans, new platforms to share music with us and new ways to keep metal's famed community spirit alive and glowing. Metal wasn't in trouble – it was evolving and thriving in whole new ways.

First out of the gate were Code Orange, Pittsburgh's much-hyped hardcore innovators who had just recently earned a rare 10/10 review in this very magazine for their incendiary fourth album, *Underneath*. The five-piece were due to play an album launch show just outside of their hometown on March 14, but with COVID-19 causing complications, they decided to do things a little differently. Live-streaming the full set from an empty venue on Twitch, the band played a ferocious show intercut with visual effects that made the whole experience feel like one long, bizarre music video. It was a resounding success; more than 13,000 people tuned in to watch.

"While it's obviously a very unfortunate situation this world is currently in, we are attempting to view it through the lens of opportunity," explains frontman Jami Morgan. "The empty arena livestream ended up being a tremendous exercise in will and creativity. It's the blueprint for how we are choosing to approach the quarantine time."

Indeed, Code Orange didn't stop there. A couple of weeks later, the band announced a new livestream series titled *You And You Alone*, launching the first episode courtesy of band keyboardist and programmer, Eric 'Shade' Balderose, who performed a unique electronic set awash with more twisted visuals.

"WE GOT MESSAGES FROM FANS ALL OVER THE WORLD"

BUT CODE ORANGE have by no means been the only band refusing to stand still. Trivium's Matt Heafy, a man who has been at the forefront of the

livestreaming revolution for years now, has been even more prolific than usual, streaming new daily sessions on Twitch, recording gig playthroughs and uploading classic Trivium sets from across the years.

"I'm just happy that I'm able to provide a place that is the people's pub, their coffee shop, their local library, their restaurant, their music venue," he explains. "It's making people's day just that little bit better at a time."

Soon, more and more bands began streaming shows, curating fun content and taking part in online events, including Metallica, Kvelertak, Within Temptation, melodic death metallers Insomnium, US folk-punks Dropkick Murphys and aforementioned Norwegian metal royalty Enslaved, who had thousands tuning into a full set playthrough they streamed live at the end of last month.

"It was the weirdest thing," says Enslaved frontman Grutle Kjellson. "But we got messages from all over the world saying, 'This meant so much to me.' It makes one very grateful. I have to say, you all mean the world to us!"

"If someone had asked me to do a livestream with ticket sales two weeks ago, my answer would've been 'hell no'. But the world changes, apparently really fast, when you're in quarantine!" adds Insomnium guitarist Markus Vanhala. The Finns were in the middle of a US tour with Omnium Gatherum when they had to cancel their schedule and head home, and so streamed a special, ticketed show featuring both bands earlier this month. "Thanks for the huge support to our beloved fans!" Markus adds.

Ultimately, the metal scene's response to this crisis has shown once again that we are a community that comes together when it really matters. As more and more bands begin to utilise new ways to reach their fans, we can maybe rest assured that we'll all come out of this, together, and stronger than ever.

FOR MORE UPDATES ON THE GREAT THINGS BANDS ARE DOING IN THE FACE OF COVID-19, HEAD TO WWW.METALHAMMER.COM

CODE ORANGE: PRESS/JUSTIN BOYD. TRIVIUM: PRESS.

10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What's been blowing our tiny brains

FUCK COVID-19
Seriously. Fuck COVID-19. Fuck it right back into the abyss. Absolutely fuck that virus.

YOU CAN'T STOP GREAT MUSIC
In the midst of all the chaos, we got new albums from Trivium, Lamb Of God, Nightwish and a shit-ton more. Hooray!

VIRTUAL GIGS CAN STAY
You mean we can watch a full set without getting our pint elbowed out of our hands? We're in.

Trivium: cheering us all up with a stonking new album

WE'RE ALL TWITCH AND TIK TOK ADDICTS NOW
Someone please stop Editor Merl from trying to do dance challenges. No one needs that.

ALSO WE ARE ALL ELITE AT MARIO KART
Goth skeleton turtle lad for life.

WE'VE GOT SOME GREAT DIGI-SUBS DEALS AT THE MO
Head to tinyurl.com/HammerSubs to get *Metal Hammer* sent straight to your device for cheap!

DEFTONES ARE HEROES
You can buy some awesome merch to support their road crew over on their official website. Go do it!

DOWNLOAD RAISED SOME MONEY FOR THE NHS
Nice one, guys! At time of going to print there were still some limited-edition t-shirts left via the Download site.

LET'S KEEP #METALLICAMONDAYS GOING FOREVER
We'll never get bored of Papa Het asking us if we like it heavy on Youtube.

AND KEEP SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES
Whether it's bands, merch companies, labels or breweries. It's more important than ever.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU CRAPPED YOUR PANTS?

…and other ridiculous questions you fling at Korn's Brian 'Head' Welch

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

HEAD IS METAL'S prodigal son. The guitarist who quit Korn, found God, and returned a stronger, happier person. Following the release of Korn's old-school-sounding *The Nothing*, we found him happy to chat all things music, faith… and poop. You guys didn't hold back when it came to questions on *The Path Of Totality*, sobriety and SpongeBob.

Since you came to faith, how have you found navigating through a music genre that's so widely associated with the Satanic?
Elliot Leaver (Facebook)
"I don't think I've met any Satanists in rock'n'roll, so I don't even think about that – it's just what I do. I love the vibe of rock music – it's who I am. And my faith is who I am too, so it can combine easily for me. Everybody has free will to choose what they want to do in life, and if they wanna be a Satanic band, then they can be a Satanic band, and I have nothing to say to them about that. I respect and love everybody."

Can we have a metal version of *The Path Of Totality* album? It's been so many years since it was released, I still can't listen to it from start to finish because of all that techno shit in it…
@levente2805 (Twitter)
"Ha ha ha! That's funny! I don't think that's gonna happen, because we like to play some songs live, but we leave the past in the past, and wanna write fresh, new music. To each their own, if they don't like all that, they don't have to listen to it all the way through."

Do you ever feel confused when someone in the band does a coin-flip and calls out 'Heads'?
@HorrorNevermore (Twitter)
"Ha ha ha! That's happened in the past once or twice. 'What?' That's how I'd react. 'Head's, what? What's mine?!'"

Do you have any advice for new bands?
@Makodero1 (Twitter)
"Probably go to hip hop or pop music, because that's the only thing that sells. I'm joking! You've gotta be in it for the long haul. You've gotta have patience and dedication, and write, write, write – hundreds of songs – because a song could change your whole career. It's not like you're trying to sell out – you're just honing your craft and getting better every time you write a song."

Korn (left to right): Head, Fieldy, Jonathan Davis, Ray Luzier, Munky

When you first rejoined the band it was around the *Path Of Totality* era with lots of electronics. What's your take on that album and the direction the band have taken since then?
Ben Willmott (Facebook)
"I love that they did that, and they got some really cool songs out of it, like *Get Up*. We still play that live, and the crowd loves it. You've got to have a passion and a desire for music, so if they didn't go in that direction, they might have been bored. We can still take stuff that they learned in that era and use it in music we write. [But] I didn't join Korn to do that type of music. We had conversations about that – me and Munky wanted it guitar-heavy, so we compromised."

Who would you most like to work with in the Christian music scene?
Steve Sowerby (Facebook)
"Is it mean to say I don't really have anybody I wanna work with? I listen to instrumental music, that has the atmosphere where I can focus in on the spiritual realm and connect with Jesus there. I don't listen to Christian music. I don't have anything against it, just sometimes… words aren't enough, you know? With instrumental, I can contemplate, and meditate, and kind of go there in my being, if you will."

To each their own, says Head.
Even if they're a Satanist

"GO DO POP AND HIP HOP. IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT'S SELLING!"

GETTY

What was the moment when you realised you had to get sober?
Chris McDonald (Facebook)
"It was when I was in Europe. I had my speed dealer and my meth dealer send me eightballs through FedEx when I ran out. So when I was sending illegal drugs through FedEx, I thought, 'I think I need to get sober.' Thank God, I didn't get caught. That person is long gone, so I'd never do anything like that again. But that scared me, because I was like, 'I've gone too far to get my drugs, now. I'm a junkie.' So it was time to change."

When was the last time you crapped your own pants?
Debs Copper (email)
"Ha ha ha! Maybe when I was drunk, 20 years ago, possibly? But I don't have a memory of that. I've never crapped my pants in my life except when I was in diapers. So I'd say diapers – I don't have a funny story. One second. [To his friend] So these are fan questions. [To *Hammer*] My friend's here, and he's probably going, 'What's she asking you?' Ha ha ha! He's like, 'They're weird!'"
***Metal Hammer*:** "Well, we are, but that personally wasn't from us, that was from Debs Copper. She's gonna be happy to have her question answered."
Head: "OK, can you put some of our dialogue in there? Because it's pretty funny! I'm trying to think about when I've crapped my pants and that's gonna read good! And then you can tell them I do have slight constipation problems, so I don't crap my pants easy."
Metal Hammer: "Oh, what a shame!"
Head: "It actually works out good, so I don't have accidents!"

Do you have a warm-up riff when you're practising/soundchecking?
@RJ_Fraser (Twitter)
"I do have to practise this riff on *You'll Never Find Me*. I screwed up one night so bad, that the guys in the band and our crew made videos of me and my really bad mess-up. They called it a 'train wreck', so they made a video of a train hitting a car, with my audio of the train wreck that I played that night. So they had a lot of fun with that. *You'll Never Find Me* is a riff I have to play over and over before we go onstage so I don't mess it up. And then Metallica, *Master Of Puppets. One*. Metallica's songs are very hard to play for some people, especially people like me, so they get my wrists warmed up and my fingers warmed up pretty good."

"I CAN KNOCK JIM ROOT OUT. I DON'T CARE IF HE'S EIGHT FEET TALL"

Patrick > SpongeBob – you heard it here first!

Think you guys might cover any Faith No More tunes on your big joint tour?
@SpiritWalkTalk (Twitter)
"Ah man, that'd be amazing – it'd be a dream come true. We've covered *We Care A Lot* [released on *Metal Hammer*'s *Decades Of Destruction* CD in 2016]. I'd love to do something off *The Real Thing*. We know a couple of those guys, but we don't know all of them, so we don't know their personalities. So it would be cool if we could, but we'll see!"

Who would win a 30-man nu metal Royal Rumble?
Jacob Hennessy (email)
"I don't know what's nu metal nowadays. Some people will combine Slipknot and Korn, and even System Of A Down – I read an article that put them in there. Who in nu metal can I take in a fight? I'd probably say Jim Root. I can knock him out. I don't care if he's eight feet tall. I was just looking for the biggest guy. The other guitar player, that big old guy, Mick? Yeah, so Mick and Jim, we'll go two against one. Put it out in the media and we'll see if it really happens! Ha ha ha! 'Head challenges Mick and Jim Root to a fight.' That's awesome!"

What is the present state of Korn Kovers? Will it ever be released?
@HEM3KA (Twitter)
"Oh! We have five or six done, and Jonathan was really hyped on the idea of doing unique covers, just something fun. So we need to get back into that frame of mind. With this time off, that maybe that could be a good idea – something to do while we're home. Tell them, 'Thank you for the idea!'"

Why have you opened a health spa? That doesn't sound very metal.
Lana Flame (email)
"Ha ha ha! I opened Zivel because there's a lot of pain and discomfort in the world, and I like to bring healing to people. The spa's got amazing things to do that. Not everything has to be metal, you guys! People need to rest and heal."

I saw a picture of you with a *SpongeBob SquarePants* movie poster. Who's your favourite character, and why?
Diego (email)
"Patrick. 100%. [Puts on Patrick voice] '*SpongeBob!*'. Because of his voice, and he's so stupid. He's happy-go-lucky. I really love SpongeBob, but I have to choose Patrick. SpongeBob is a little bit more intelligent than Patrick, and I just like Patrick's simplicity."

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THE SLAYLIST

TREVOR STRNAD

The Black Dahlia Murder vocalist loves the all-time greats *and* bands that don't get the dues they deserve

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

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"GRAVE'S *HATING LIFE* blew me away as a kid. Even their fans tend to sleep on it, but it came out around '94 when death metal was branching out with stuff like *Wolverine Blues* and bands were becoming groovier. *Sorrowfilled Moon* didn't do the usual 'I'm going to stick my dick in your corpse' thing in regards to necrophilia, it was more romantic and real. It had such an effect on what I write for Black Dahlia Murder; longing for somebody that's crossed over the line into death, blurring the lines of insanity and getting creepy, obsessive vibes.

AUTOPSY's Chris Reifert had a huge impact on me, lyrically, too. When I was a kid I couldn't find their records; all I knew was there were a lot of places that refused to stock them because they were so graphic. I *had* to find their record, and *Mental Funeral* is one of the best death metal records out there, so doomy and dismal – *In The Grip Of Winter* has these lyrics that are literally about freezing to death. I'm glad they're getting their dues now they've reformed – they influenced Entombed, Dismember and so many other greats, a totally important band people need to wake up to.

My first love in metal was actually MEGADETH. I came back from school after a really shitty day and *Symphony For Destruction* was on MTV; it just blew my mind. Getting *Countdown To Extinction* was a huge turning point – I realised metal was my thing, not sports or whatever else other people around me were into. *Ashes In Your Mouth* is a really underrated song that may just be their best – an epic with an Iron Maiden-style duelling lead. The only thing that separates the Big 4 from a lot of other thrash bands is the vocal quality, and one band that had that X factor but never became known in the US is XENTRIX. A lot of people loved the follow-up but I'm a *Shattered Existence* guy through and through.

WRATHCHILD AMERICA was a more recent discovery for me – I was searching the thrash metal annals for stuff I'd missed as I was always a more death metal guy growing up. They stood out from the pack with their vocals and the aggressiveness of the album (*3-D*) is choppy, challenging and mindbending. It's back onto the death doom trip for RUNEMAGICK. The title track to *Enter The Realm Of Death* is just crushing. That band is super-underrated; they fizzled out for a while but now they're back and on great form.

I listened to the first four MANOWAR albums recently, having only really known the more recent, cornier stuff until now. They started as this incredible band that was very dynamic and theatrical, to the point where you can imagine a band like Bathory taking notes on how to get this grandiose energy into a song. <CODE>'s *Resplendent Grotesque* has gotta be my favourite black metal record. It's creative, progressive and kinda… sexy? It's a weird thing to say, but the vocalist Kvohst – Mathew Joseph McNerney – went on to get a lot more popularity with like Beastmilk and projects that were more folky. I got into them through Dødheimsgard, who Mat also sang with, but I heard this on its release in 2009 – it blew my head off and I've been looking for anything like it since.

90215 by YES might be my favourite album of all time. My dad got me into them, drilling it into my head as a kid. I didn't realise I cared for it so much until I was in my 20s in a record store hearing it on the PA, and it was like, 'Man, I know every word to this entire record!' I fell in love again – it's progressive, challenging music with some headbanging riffs and it's one of those things that has so much nostalgia attached to it. I've been on a huge disco and funk kick for the past couple years. STEVE MONITE is the king of Nigerian funk. *Only You* is from 1984 but something about it just sounds so modern when you hear it. The bassline is really infectious and the effect on the vocal makes it kind of timeless. I like stuff that makes you want to dance – people might be surprised by that, but it's just a great song that makes me wanna shake my butt!" H

"IT WASN'T JUST STICKING DICKS IN CORPSES"

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LIFE LESSONS

DAVID VINCENT

After two stints as frontman with the mighty Morbid Angel, David Vincent is finally releasing his long-awaited autobiography. Read and learn!

WORDS: JOEL MCIVER

DEATH METAL WOULD never have evolved into its present form without the astounding late-80s and early-90s work of Morbid Angel, the Florida-based foursome who are credited with being one of the first bands to define the movement's aggression and technicality. The band's frontman, singer and bassist, David Vincent, brought a form of lyrical poetry to ferocious songs, which elevated Morbid above their contemporaries, recording five studio albums with the quartet and touring the planet. Now a solo artist and frontman of Vltimas and I Am Morbid, the latter of which is also the title of his new autobiography, Vincent looks back at the hard-earned wisdom he's gained over the decades.

PRACTISE KINDNESS, EVEN IF NO ONE IS WATCHING

"It seems like the American economy is doing really well. Mainstream media is looking for reasons to be negative, but people seem to have money in their pocket. Furthermore, what people choose to do with what they've earned is not my concern. Spend it, do what you want with it. If you want to be philanthropic, that's great, but I wouldn't necessarily revere someone who is more philanthropic. It's not a race to see who can be kinder, nicer, or look a certain way or whatever foolish goal people choose to pursue. If you do something, maybe do it quietly, because at the end of the day, are you doing something just to get credit for it, or to be seen by others as this wonderful person?"

RELIGION: WE CAN AGREE TO DISAGREE

"I'm happy for anyone who has a religious belief that is helpful for them, because I want everybody to feel happy and prosper. I did what I needed to do to find the things that I needed to find, and in whatever way that manifests in somebody else's life, I'm supportive of religion if it helps them find their own way to their salvation."

BEING REBELLIOUS: WHAT WORKS, AND WHAT DOESN'T

"I will always be rebellious at heart, but the things that once hampered me are no longer of any consequence. I take things that used to be obstacles and turn them into advantages. I take the time to understand the basis of my beliefs and make quality observations, and reach quality conclusions, based on my own code. I've regretted some things, and there are some things that I feel apologetic about, but I'm unapologetic about who I am. I don't think anybody goes through life without ruffling a few feathers. I don't concentrate on that, though; it's not useful and it's not energy well spent."

YOU CAN GET WHAT YOU NEED, BUT ONLY IF YOU ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

"People must find the time to question things, and I want my music and book to stimulate people into doing that. We are provided with plenty of opportunities to be distracted and mislead. It is more relaxing to peruse through a catalogue for designer fashion or take in a movie or play a videogame than it is to make the effort to be informed. The truth is that a knowledgeable citizen is a dangerous citizen."

FUCKING UP CAN BE A GOOD THING

"I enjoy the freedom both to succeed and fail. One of my favourite philosophical quotes is 'That which doesn't destroy you makes you stronger.' I totally believe that, 100%, because you learn from your mistakes. I've learned from my mistakes, and it's been a great motivator. When you make a mistake, oftentimes there's some kind of pain that goes along with it – whether it's physical or financial or whatever – and then you know to dial in some of your choices a little bit better, hopefully. But when you have paternalistic institutions, mainly governmental, that take the pain out of these things, it's easy to abdicate responsibility for your own life to someone else. As a result you don't learn from your mistakes, and you don't ultimately evolve and become a better person."

"PEOPLE MUST FIND THE TIME TO QUESTION THINGS"

AMERICA IS (MOSTLY) GREAT

"I am an American and proud to be American. I'm not necessarily proud of some of the things our government has chosen to do, and some of the things within our system that I think are fundamentally immoral or incorrect on the world stage. But from a standpoint of where I'm looking at my lifestyle, this is the best place for me, for those reasons. You grow up in a certain place and you come to respect certain things. Could I manage elsewhere? I could, yes, but would I choose to do so? I think not."

ACHIEVING HAPPINESS ISN'T THE RESULT OF BEING LUCKY

"There have been a number of highs and lows over my life, rather than a period of time when I was the happiest I've been, or the saddest. There is no comedy without tragedy; there is no right without wrong. It's two sides of a coin, and this particular coin *is* my life. When I look back at things in retrospect and think, 'If I'd made a different choice, there might have been a different outcome', I realise that all this was really part of a process; part of an ongoing story."

TAKE TIME OUT TO BE INSPIRED

"Anything that has to do with interacting with nature and being outdoors, I love – whitewater rafting, hiking, hunting, fishing… It's very relaxing, and it brings me the perspective that we're part of this process. We live on a beautiful planet, but you lose that perspective if you spend most of your days in a city as just another consumer. It's nice to spend time away from all that, and do things like camping and riding motorcycles through the countryside. I relieve stress that way. It gives me lots of time for productive internal dialogue. I'm inspired about it, and it makes its way into every bastion of my life, from songwriting to my worldview."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE DOESN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT

This has been important to me since I was a kid in the Boy Scouts. I learned survival skills and the code of honour and respect for nature. I felt those things instinctually anyway, but this was an institution where kids have an opportunity to learn skills, from tying knots to orienteering, or putting yourself in a situation where – if there were some sort of catastrophic thing – you'd have the skillset to make a positive difference."

PRESS/TINA KORHONEN

David Vincent:
born rebel

Mediocrity is not an option, people

"I LISTEN TO MUSIC TO UNDERSTAND WHY IT'S POPULAR"

THE PRESENT INFLUENCES THE FUTURE

"In our society, we have some of the greatest minds that have evolved from the Platos of the world. Each time someone takes over and improves upon the last guy's work, the next person after that takes over and improves exponentially on that achievement, and so we find ourselves doing some of these marvellous things that we're doing these days. The flipside of that is that we're living in a world that somehow doesn't always embrace the best and brightest. This is going to have to be addressed, because as quickly as the sciences that we've just discussed are rapidly evolving in one direction, pop culture and religious extremism are dragging a large portion of the population downward. A high percentage of people are not in the bell curve range of the folks who are leading the charge in the evolution that's taking us to new heights. That worries me."

SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

"I believe in keeping an open mind. If I listen to music and I don't understand it, I want to make sure I don't dismiss it. I'm in my 50s and it'd be easy to be dismissive of that which I don't understand. Knowing this, and being aware that this is the kind of thing that happens with age or unfamiliarity, I make a point of listening to music and trying to find out why it's popular. I ask myself if I can feel those things, or share them. At the very least, I'll give it a chance. My decision may be that I don't like it, but I don't want to just write it off without giving it the same chance that I'd have expected from folks listening to the music I make. My mind is more open the older I get, because I've recognised that being closed leads to stagnation."

IT IS BETTER TO FAIL IN ORIGINALITY THAN TO SUCCEED IN IMITATION

"I don't want to be a passive participant in life. I want to be an active participant, even though it requires work on my part in order to do so. I feel much more enriched because I've taken this attitude; I feel that I've been able to share that enrichment and extend it to others by encouraging them not to be as I am, or to do the things I've done, but to find their own path. I've made my share of mistakes, and I'm certainly no angel, but I am morbid when it comes to this. By 'morbid' I mean 'death to small-mindedness' and 'death to mediocrity'. It's the antithesis to shuffling along and being ushered into settling for mediocrity. Don't settle for that."

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IN THE STUDIO

SÓLSTAFIR

Iceland's cinematic wayfarers are rediscovering the blastbeat

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER

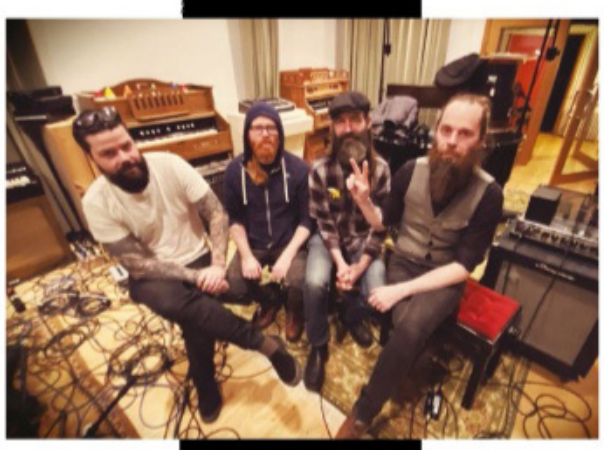
ONE OF THE most unique, mournfully epic and immediately identifiable bands to have emerged from the metal underground, Iceland's Sólstafir have still never failed to surprise with each album, or to resonate with emotional nerves you never knew you had. With their latest album near completion, we bunkered down with frontman Aðalbjörn 'Addi' Tryggvason to find out what new twists are in store.

How is life in the Sólstafir camp?
"Pretty good. I'm at our rehearsal space. We're finishing up the new album so we set up our own studio. We did go back to Sundlaugin studio, where we recorded the last three albums, for a few days. We did all the drums, we did half of the bass there and finishing that here, I'm doing the guitars here, and then we're going back to Sundlaugin for the mix. I'm also having a kid in five weeks!"

Do you think the sense of impending fatherhood has made its way into the album?
"I'm not sure it's there yet with writing music, but emotionally I'm a bit weird. Of course, I'm not the one who is pregnant, but I can for sure say, spiritually, I feel like I'm pregnant. I'm having different reflections and different emotional reactions to movies. It's weird! I didn't see it coming, but I'm way more sensitive towards all sorts of stuff. And the kid is not even here yet."

Have the albums in the past felt like emotional barometers for where you were at the time?
"Yeah, it's like strapping a GoPro onto your head and taking acid and wandering into the woods for a week. You don't know what's going to happen – it could be weather pressure, it could be a death in the family, it could be a newborn or love – you never know what's going to affect it."

THE FACTS
ALBUM: 7
STUDIO: Sundlaugin, Mosfellsbær; Studio Grótta, Reykjavík
PRODUCER: Birgir Jón Birgirsson
EXPECT: Wide-scope, soul-searching splendour with added blackened turbulence and a core of (British) steel.



Your last album, *Berdreyminn*, was the first with new drummer Hallgrímur. How has he bedded into the band?
"We're closer friends now. Being in a band is like a marriage: it's different after five years than it is after five days. I don't feel that Hallgrímur is the new guy. He's bringing as much to the table creatively as anyone else in the band. He doesn't come from a Fields Of The Nephilim or Darkthrone background; he was more of a grunge kid. We had to teach him all the *Köld* album stuff for the 10th anniversary shows."

Did those shows impact the new album in any way?
"Actually, those shows, we were doing songs with blastbeats, and there's some heavy stuff on this new album that we haven't used for a long time. So it has some weird stuff that I wouldn't say is new to us, because it all goes back to the song *Pale Rider*, so playing that and rehearsing it constantly for that tour, it became somewhat more… I wouldn't say natural, but it became very fresh playing heavy and fast stuff again. So we embraced having fast drums on the new album. It's not a 'blastbeat album', but there's some heavy stuff on it, and there's also very soft stuff and different stuff we've never done before."

Does that still give you scope for the epic, 10-minute plus songs?
"Yeah, I think we have three 10-minute songs on this album. There's a lot of melancholy. I'm not gonna say it's a fast album, it's a Sólstafir album. But this is way more guitar-orientated. I guess we're trying to be Judas Priest and maybe this is our *Firepower*."

What is it about Sundlaugin studio that brings you back?
"We did *Svartir Sandir* there as well; we were there for a month, and everybody was out of their minds drunk the whole time. The producer got beaten up by a bandmember, and then we were there for two months doing *Ótta*, and I was getting sober, so it was even more weird in a way. It almost feels like coming home; we've recorded our albums there for the last decade in all sorts of different points of life. No one got beaten up and no one used drugs this time around." H

SÓLSTAFIR'S NEW RECORD IS DUE OUT LATER THIS YEAR VIA SEASON OF MIST

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PRESS

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THE STORY BEHIND

INTERSTATE LOVE SONG BY STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

Written off by some cynics as grunge also-rans, Stone Temple Pilots went about creating a single that would help establish their own legacy

WORDS: DAVE LING

BY THE SPRING of 1994, Stone Temple Pilots had notched four million sales of their debut album, *Core*, yet found themselves dismissed as the grunge scene's arch opportunists: lambasted for claiming a place alongside the kingpins of the Seattle explosion, but coming from San Diego. In the eyes of their detractors – and there were many – this was all too convenient. Although the band tried to draw the positives from the situation, being hailed as the Best New Band of '94 by the readers of *Rolling Stone* but also its Worst New Band by the same magazine's critics is bound to screw with your head. While out on the road on a 14-month campaign for *Core*, the group had written an even more colourful and inventive set of songs. With these they were confident of making a follow-up album big and important enough to free the band from the 'grunge' tag (no one knew, of course, that Kurt Cobain would take his own life two months before the album's release, bringing the era to a permanent end).

THE FACTS

RELEASED
1994

ALBUM
Purple

PERSONNEL
Scott Weiland (vocals, guitar), Dean DeLeo (guitar), Robert DeLeo (bass), Eric Kretz (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
18 (US Billboard 200)

"People sometimes talk about the curse of the sophomore slump, but we didn't pay any heed to that," bassist Robert DeLeo remarks casually of their second album, *Purple*. "We knew that the songs we had were pretty special." One of these new tunes had been composed by the bassist while sitting in the passenger seat of a Winnebago motorhome in which the group zig-zagged across North America. These origins were appropriate, as the song, *Interstate Love Song*, became the perfect soundtrack for driving with the window down.

"I wrote that song on a nylon-stringed guitar that had cost just $25," Robert says with a chuckle. "I've now got a $125 nylon-stringed guitar," he adds, whipping out said instrument to play the song's signature riff in its original form down the phone. "It began as a [Brazilian music style] bossa nova tune but I didn't think people would like that so much, so I added a country riff and a melody I had floating around in my head." Although the process only took "around 10 minutes," Robert knew straight away that he had come up with something of considerable value. "This was a different level of writing for me," he acknowledges.

IT WAS DURING the recording of the song for *Purple* that vocalist Scott Weiland threw in the '*Interstate*' part of the title. And while the band worked at Southern Tracks Recording in Atlanta, his fiancée Janina Castaneda remained at home in California. Their relationship was on the rocks due to the singer's hidden yet worsening addiction to heroin, and the words he came up with for it bled out deceit and broken promises. Each night Weiland would bury his shame and place long, emotional calls to Janina, insisting that he was clean. "The words are about the lies I was trying to conceal while making the *Purple* record," he later admitted. "The song's meaning wasn't completely obvious, but when you know what it was about it's a very poetic piece," Robert says now. "But as a writer, Scott always was very poetic. He also liked to leave the listener to make up their own minds as to a song's interpretation."

As with *Core*, Stone Temple Pilots called upon the services of producer Brendan O'Brien for *Purple*. "We trusted Brendan completely and the process felt very natural," Robert recalls. "It's

GETTY

Stone Temple Pilots in Pittsburg, PA on July 28, 1993

pretty incredible to think that *Purple* was tracked, mixed and out of the door in just 11 days." In an interview from the time, drummer Eric Kretz said, "We would maybe be worrying that a song sounded a little too close to Alice In Chains or Pearl Jam, and each time Brendan talked us out of that."

"Brendan wasn't an over-thinker. He was a doer," Robert agrees. "It was a privilege to make records with him, and we certainly were not trying to copy anybody else." A quarter-century down the line, those written accusations of his band being Pearl Jam rip-offs, when juxtaposed by the love of millions of fans, now prompt the bassist to break into a wry smile.

"Oh, I don't know," he shrugs nonchalantly. "I didn't read any of that stuff. I certainly wasn't making records for the press. For me, the joy of it all was writing music, something that still motivates me today."

Oh c'mon… it must have rankled just a little bit?

"No. Such criticism was never really a concern to me," he responds patiently. "We were working with people of Brendan's stature, and those were the opinions that mattered to me. Everything except the writing and performing of the songs was simply fluff."

However, thanks in part to the success of *Interstate Love Song* and its sister singles, *Vasoline* and *Big Empty*, *Purple* was a massive commercial success, topping the Billboard chart for three weeks and selling more than six million copies. Robert admits that the band's seemingly instant celebrity became a problem.

"AS A WRITER, SCOTT WAS ALWAYS POETIC"

ROBERT DELEO

"I'm still taking medication for the fact," he laughs. "I don't know too many people that could have handled that pressure coming at you at such speed. It will either make you stronger or everything starts unravelling. We all handled it differently, but safe to say it can be a deadly thing."

LIKE SO MANY before him, Scott Weiland chose to find refuge in drugs and alcohol. To say that this made him an unreliable bandmate would be a significant understatement. Over the coming years Weiland would be in and out of both STP and rehab, causing tours to be canned and expensive recording sessions to be aborted when he failed to turn up. More catastrophic still, in May 1995, after *Purple* had debuted at No.1 in America, Weiland was arrested in Pasadena for drug possession. Having been bailed out of jail, the increasingly erratic singer jumped from the window of a moving car, bought a bag of heroin and promptly vanished. For a while the instrumentalists (completed by guitarist Dean DeLeo) hired another singer and operated under the name of Talk Show, but it was STP that the public really wanted.

"During that whole period I learned how to garden very well," Robert sighs. "I'm not kidding; you can either sit around waiting for the band to get up on its feet again, or you can work on getting green fingers. I did the latter."

Scott quit STP in 2002 and went on to form Velvet Revolver with Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash and bass player Duff McKagan. Sadly, these bandmates would have to learn to live with the same sense of frustration. Five years ▶

Tortured soul: Scott performing with Stone Temple Pilots in New York City on August 29, 1994

later, following another relapse, Velvet Revolver fired Scott. Finally, at the age of 48, following an accidental overdose of cocaine, alcohol and MDA, Scott Weiland was found dead on the tourbus while on the road with his group The Wildabouts in 2015.

Some might consider Scott's fate inevitable following the loss of his close friend and Wildabouts bandmate Jeremy Brown, the cancer diagnoses of both his mother and father, massive financial worries, estrangement from his children, self-medication and, above all, mental illness. That didn't make it any less tragic.

In 2013, STP caused a sensation by hiring none other than Linkin Park's Chester Bennington as their singer. Over the course of two years this arrangement would yield only a four-song EP, *High Rise*, and some live dates. Robert believes that Chester, who took his own life in the summer of 2017, by which time he was refocusing on Linkin Park, never really got a fair crack of the whip as a member of the Pilots.

"No, he absolutely didn't, and I really, really miss Chester," the bassist rues. "He was a lovely human being and we needed his positive energy in our world at that time. However, there really was no time for our relationship to blossom, and I'm saddened when I think about Chester every day – just like I think about Scott."

In the meantime, Stone Temple Pilots continue to tour and record, and also to perform *Interstate Love Song* at their gigs. Why not? Sometimes when the going gets tough, the only response is to leap into a car, throw down the top and burn rubber.

Robert DeLeo insists that the song still remains valid in the hands of their current lead singer, Jeff Gutt, a former *The X Factor* contestant who joined the group in 2017. "Playing live is a bit like attending a high school reunion – you snap right back into where you were all those years ago," Robert concludes, returning the $125 guitar to its case. "And you know what? Someday I'd still like to record *Interstate Love Song* as a bossa nova."

"PEOPLE CALLING US PEARL JAM RIP-OFFS DIDN'T CONCERN ME"

ROBERT DELEO

***PURPLE: THE DELUXE 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION* IS AVAILABLE NOW VIA RHINO**

GETTY

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MegaDave: he's baaaaaack!

YOUR SHOUT

STOP MAKING ME FEEL OLD!

And other demands you had this month

LONG LIVE MEGADAVE

In these shitty times it was so good to read your heartwarming feature with Dave Mustaine. He's proof that with the right mentality you can get through anything! I bet the next Megadeth album will be a crusher as well!
One Happy Thrasher (email)

We're happy to have Dave firing on all cylinders again and were honoured to have him back on our cover last month. And yeah, bring on that Megadeth record!

VIRAL SHIT

It's devastating how much the coronavirus has fucked up the metal scene. Tours and festivals going down was just the start – it's often people behind the scenes that feel this the most! I'm hoping metal is back on its feet soon!
Ozz Paursen (email)

We hear ya, pal. It fucking *sucks*. But keep that chin up – we've seen some wonderful things grow from this shit show, not least of all in the metal scene. Keep strong, keep supporting bands and keep supporting each other!

OLDEN YEARS

Hammer, stop with all the 30-and 40-year anniversaries, you're making me feel old! (I'm joking, keep it up, it's nice to remember some classic times when you were there to see them happen!).
Helen Carr (email)

Don't worry, we're still packing exciting new shit in with the ye olde stuff. That said, we'd be neglecting our duties if we weren't celebrating the crap out of metal's rich history. Although we're still not ready to accept that *Hybrid Theory* turns 20 this year…

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

'Happy' music is subjective. Some people stereotype metal for being too edgy and angry etc, but it's unfair to paint them all with the same brush. Bands like Dream Theater, Tool and Gojira helped me understand life and my emotions. And even if people insist on metal being an 'angry' genre, at least it shows emotion. Unlike these mumble rappers that make random pigeon noises, which is apparently music to some people.
Ryan Towell (Facebook)

We don't know about pigeon music, but we do know that metal makes us pretty freakin' happy. Actually, tell Deputy Editor Eleanor about those pigeon tunes. She loves those feathery bastards.

MUDDY MARVELLOUS

With so many festivals taking a year off because of YOU KNOW WHAT, it has made me think that we all need to be more grateful for having festivals in the first place. I'm never gonna moan about a bit of mud at Download again!
Jesse Robsen (email)

Amen! Losing so many great events has been a real sucker-punch for the music scene. When they return, you can bet we'll be getting right back behind them.

#TWEETS

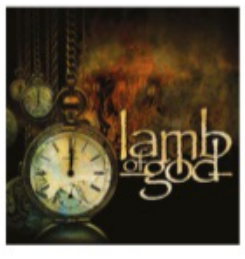
What to do when #coronavirus closes your kid's nursery? Read back issues of @MetalHammer with them of course! Hide and seek was so last summer
@oliverjpope

Well done @MetalHammer the @BleedFromWithin guys deserve the column inches, I expect the new album to be next level
@thankumetal

I thought the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame should defer the induction ceremony because Depeche Mode have somehow been elected to the ROCK AND ROLL Hall of Fame. If it was a pop music hall of fame I could understand, but they will join disco queen Donna Summer. Unfathomable.
@ThingsISee

HAMMER STEREO

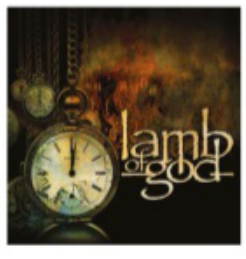
What's been blowing our office speakers



LAMB OF GOD
Lamb Of God
"Did someone order an extra side of RIFFS?"
MERLIN ALDERSLADE
EDITOR

NINE INCH NAILS
Ghosts V: Together and Ghosts VI: Locusts
"Thanks, NIN, for helping us make sense of a strange new world"
ELEANOR GOODMAN
DEPUTY EDITOR

TRIPTYKON W/ THE METROPOLE ORKEST
REQUIEM (ROADBURN 2019)
"Imperious, nail-biting majesty from metal's most commanding visionary"
JONATHAN SELZER
REVIEWS EDITOR



LAMB OF GOD
Lamb Of God
"Groovy goodness, and angry as hell. Just what we need right now"
VANESSA THORPE
PRODUCTION EDITOR

FORNDOM
Fabir
"If you are eagerly awaiting the new Wardruna, Ludvig Swärd's ambient Nordic folk project fills the void nicely"
ALICE PATTILLO
ONLINE EDITOR

LUCIFER
Lucifer III
"Devilishly catchy retro rock at its best"
LOUISE BROCK
ART EDITOR

DAVE MUSTAINE: JEREMY SAFFER

NEW NOISE

IRIST

They may officially hail from Atlanta, but these nations-uniting metallers look set to follow in the footsteps of some South American greats

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

WHEN SEPULTURA RELEASED

Beneath The Remains on April 7, 1989, they kicked open the gates for a global metal revolution, sending out a simple message that it didn't matter where you came from: if your band kicked ass, it could conquer the world. Almost 31 years (and several thousand bands from every corner of the planet) later, that story is set to start afresh with the arrival of *Order Of The Mind*, the debut album by Atlanta, Georgia's Irist. If you're wondering how Atlanta can possibly play a part in the global metal movement, just consider its contributions to the world in recent years have included the likes of Mastodon, Whores and Norma Jean, and that Irist's members hail variously from Argentina, Chile and Brazil respectively (with a couple of local Atlantans for diversity).

"When I first met Bruno [Segovia, bass] in Atlanta there was a fairly thriving underground Latino metal and hardcore scene going on," explains guitarist and founding member Pablo Davila. "The connection most people made was about heritage; it was Latinos making music and it didn't matter if it was a ska band playing with a metal band or whatever. But over the course of a few years it all fell apart."

Nonetheless, the existence of such a scene helped to sow the seeds for what would later become Irist, its members taking what they had learned playing in various bands in Atlanta's Latino underground scene and applying them to an ambitious new project. Formed in 2015, things didn't truly come together for Irist until they recruited Rodrigo Carvalho, their Brazil-born vocalist who had moved to the city with his wife. Despite earning a scholarship in the city some years prior, Rodrigo admits it wasn't easy in the immediate aftermath of moving to the city. "At the time I knew nobody other than my wife. It can be very lonely in the cities, especially if you can't get around. I became incredibly depressed, worried that I'd never find the right people."

Scouring classified ads, Rodrigo eventually came into contact with a local band that just so happened to be in need of a vocalist. Already involved in the underground scene (including a side-project with Pablo himself), Rodrigo made a natural fit for Irist. But even in these early stages, the wheels were already in motion for the band to shoot for the stars, having established a connection with legendary A&R rep Monte Conner (the same man who'd signed Sepultura more than three decades prior).

"Joining the band was a bit like jumping on a moving train, basically!" jokes Rodrigo. "There was a lot of pressure; they had three songs ready to send but Monte had never heard me, so I had to put everything in to make sure things worked and all their hard work wasn't wasted!"

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Ambitious, world-conquering metal

FOR FANS OF:
Gojira, Conjurer, Fear Factory

LISTEN TO:
Burning Sage

THIS THREE-TRACK DEMO

went down a storm and the band were soon snapped up for a record deal with Nuclear Blast, securing not just funding for their debut record, but enough to fly thousands of miles across the ocean to record in the exotic environs of, erm, Southampton. Why there, of all places? Well, they were chasing the trail of another 21st-century metal sensation in the making.

"Adam [Mitchell], our other guitar player, came across the last Conjurer album, which was recorded and mixed by Lewis Johns," explains Pablo. "We were just trying to find someone who could capture the drum sound we wanted and we loved what he achieved; we pitched that to Monte and everything kinda worked out!"

Combining the ambitious heaviness of Gojira, the ferocious intensity of Conjurer and a small-dose of inspiration from 90s metal legends for reference, Irist have all the ingredients for a 21st-century metal phenomenon on *Order Of The Mind*.

Irist: celebrating their roots

PRESS/SUSY IRAIS REYES

Spread across 10 tracks, the record showcases the diversity and creativity of their sound, not easily traceable to any one band or subgenre of metal. "Even though we all like more or less the same bands, we each built a different relationship with music," Pablo says. "In my case, metal was in the background a lot when growing up and I got a lot more exposure to traditional stuff my parents listened to. We wanted to take all these different styles and textures and have everything come together and become one mass."

"I think for South American teens it's not uncommon to have a very similar background," agrees Rodrigo. "You grow up listening to traditional folk, but also like metal. Folk is so much part of your culture and identity that it's always there."

"ATLANTA HAD A THRIVING LATINO METAL SCENE!"

While these influences aren't so overt as in, say, *Roots* or newer bands like Alien Weaponry, there's no denying that a deep sense of pride and identity exists at the heart of what Irist do, accentuated by Rodrigo's lyrics, which speak of triumphing over adversity ("based on a mix of personal experience and life in general!" he says). With an overarching message of triumph and behemoths like Nuclear Blast already on board, it's fair to say Irist could very well be the next global heavy metal sensation.

"Monte is responsible for signing one of the biggest reasons I do this!" exclaims Pablo. "I think because we come from Brazil and other South American countries, it strikes up memories of finding Sepultura – it feels like coming full circle!"

***ORDER OF THE MIND* IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST**

NEW NOISE

SHAAM LAREIN

Glacial gothic ambience meets Middle Eastern mysticism in a stirring new sound from Sweden

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURES: ELISABETH JENSEN BÜNGER

SHAAM LAREIN'S DEBUT album, *Sculpture*, is aptly titled. Steeped in a glacial, gothic atmosphere, it sounds as though it's emerging gradually out of the dark, forming itself organically in real time. The eponymous frontwoman's voice, part spectral presence, part resolute, subterranean guide, acts as a beacon for a spellbinding vision that's as mercurial as it is immersive.

"When I started writing *Sculpture*," says Shaam, "I didn't really have a specific plan. I challenged myself vocally and tested my limits, and I got to know myself more when I wrote the album. As the songs were created the more the record became very serious in its expression."

Based in Sweden, but with a family background from the Middle East, Shaam's performing career started early as a member of her father's travelling theatre. But it's also her brief background as a jazz singer that adds to the dramatic yet displaced feeling to the album, shifted further onto new axes by its non-Western musical scales drawn from her heritage.

"Middle Eastern scales have that beautiful, fragile, sad, tragic sound that I just love," says Shaam. "Maybe it's because I recognise myself in these scales, but there is something there that I feel I have so much control over. I can play with these scales and never get tired. And that's what I think will always follow Shaam Larein. The foundation is so solid and now, and we'll just keep experimenting even more."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
An otherworldly journey through doom and gothic rock, navigated by Middle Eastern scales

FOR FANS OF:
Jex Thoth, Siouxsie And The Banshees, Purson

LISTEN TO:
Aurora

Lyrically, *Sculpture* finds an allegorical path between personal exorcism and spiritual awakening, trepidation and summoning of will. If it's a record in search of answers, it's also fundamentally a space to endlessly explore.

"*Sculpture* radiates tragedy, sorrow and frustration," says Shaam. "I can see my weakness and my strength as I listen to it. Lyrically, I found a lot of emotions: fear, reality and fantasy and so much more. But at the same time, each listener is different from the other and what I think sounds dark may give other people hope. I didn't think too much when I was making it, and I don't think you should. I feel that the less you *try* the more genuine something becomes." H

***SCULPTURE* IS OUT NOW VIA ICONS CREATING EVIL ART**

REASON DEFINE

When rock music is done this well, it doesn't need to be complicated

WORDS: NAOMI SANDERS

"WE PULL INSPIRATION from every form of music, so it's hard to give specific influences," says Caitlin Rutkowski, bassist with Charlotte, North Carolina rockers Reason Define. In truth, while their self-professed influences may be varied – they can be found referencing everyone from Beartooth and A Day To Remember to, erm, Lizzo on social media – the music they've crafted uses a tried and tested blueprint: making heavy rock music that sounds catchy and kicks ass.

Completed by vocalist Paolina Massaro, drummer Syd McVicker and guitarists Shelby McVicker and Sav Ruf, Reason Define's 2017 debut *Far From Strangers* was an outstanding first album, brimming with huge riffs, irrepressible hooks and massive choruses. Their second album, last year's *In Memory...*, expanded on that sound while bringing in a conceptually loaded theme: the Five Stages Of Grief. Putting those stages into musical form meant the band could share their personal stories through song.

"As a band, we stand for strength and self-expression," Caitlin continues. "It's hard to do life alone, and we hope to be able to express ourselves and our own emotion through our music for people to be able to connect with it on a personal level."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Strong guitars, blazing vocals, killer drum lines, all blended together for an urgent rock'n'roll attack

FOR FANS OF:
Doll Skin, Halestorm, Alter Bridge

LISTEN TO:
Reaper

One listen to songs like *Kingdom* and *Reaper* is proof of that – tracks that are packed with empowering lyrics that make us all feel alive, even through the dark times. Caitlin agrees: "We express a lot of emotion through our music live and we love to perform. People feed off that energy heavily." H

***IN MEMORY...* IS OUT NOW**

PRESS

BLOOD SPORE

Death metallers with a warning for humanity. And a love of… fungus?

WORDS: ALEX DELLER

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Vile death metal with an unhealthy toadstool fixation

FOR FANS OF:
Incantation, diSEMBOWELMENT, Portal

LISTEN TO:
Hostile Fruiting Bodies

PHILLY DEATH-DOOM CREW Blood Spore began like a patch of mould on the wall in 2018, blossoming with a demo so good it *had* to be released as an EP. If the title – *Fungal Warfare Against All Life* – sounds odd, that's because it is, with the band using DM as a delivery mechanism for tales of a sentient fungus that decides humanity has gotten too big for its britches. It's a question of metaphor colliding with warped imagination, the band viewing environmental degradation through the kind of mushroom-encrusted prism that would make sci-fi writers proud.

"The idea of creating an entity that served as a sort of anti-hero against the complacency of human damage was interesting," says guitarist Luke Gary.

Bassist and vocalist Chris Emerson continues, "It's a law of nature that all of us will eventually be broken down and redistributed by the decomposing forces of saprophytic organisms. That is death metal as *fuck*."

Damn right it is, and hearing that work is underway on a full-length exploring the same dank universe is good news indeed. But from whence does this interest in mycology sprout?

"Fred [Grabosky, drums] and I have had a long interest in fungi," says Luke. "Fred was fascinated with some of the cordyceps species and their ability to create real-life 'zombies'. I'm obsessed with the chemicals that fungi are able to produce that can shape the way we perceive the world. What if the fungus tried to actively change what you saw? Or hide things from you?"

***FUNGAL WARFARE UPON ALL LIFE* IS OUT NOW**

IMONOLITH

This supergroup has brains and brawn in equal measure

WORDS: ALI COOPER • PICTURES: ERICH SAIDE

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Devin Townsend meets Shadow Of The Colossus

FOR FANS OF:
Threat Signal, System Of A Down, Korn

LISTEN TO:
The Reign

FROM THE MINDS behind Devin Townsend Project, Threat Signal and Noise Therapy comes supergroup Imonolith. These metal masterminds put their collective experiences into debut album *State Of Being*, the result of five years' writing while drummer Ryan Van Poederooyen and guitarist Brian Waddell faced the end of DTP.

"Imonolith is a collection of everything we've done musically," Ryan Van Poederooyen explains. "We all come from different backgrounds but everything flows easily together. We use our 15 years with Devin as inspiration — my life's work has gone into Imonolith."

Recorded with an old-school approach, *State Of Being* helped Imonolith discover themselves.

"We recorded all the drums to two-inch tape, the vocals are raw takes, there are no samples or DIs. We wanted to develop our own sound, you can't get any more yourselves than recording with the basics."

Imonolith's shows have brought back fond memories of life on the road with Devin Townsend Project.

"I never thought I would say this, but I really can't wait to step into Heathrow Airport again. When we land as Imonolith, I'm gonna kiss the ground! Being able to do this as our band is one of the best moments of my musical career so far."

***STATE OF BEING* IS OUT NOW**

IN THE KNOW

What your favourite bands are listening to

ABOVE, BELOW

"ABOVE, BELOW ARE from the same area of Sydney as us and we've watched them take huge strides in their writing and live performance. Their compositions are really ambitious and they're unafraid to incorporate ideas from outside the heavy spectrum. They'll be touring internationally soon so we recommend them to anyone who favours the progressive end of metalcore!"

DANIEL FURNARI, POLARIS

PRESS

HOARD ALMIGHTY

The best garments, grimoires, trinkets and sigil-powered prints from the wake of this month's UK live scene

CIRITH UNGOL
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METAL BLADE
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ARE YOU LOOKING for full-force, bloodthirsty true cult epic power metal made by fur-clad mad-lads in their 60s (and who isn't)? The first LP in 29 years from these veteran Californian eccentrics is already reason to fall to your knees in gratitude to the gods of heavy metal, but if the event wasn't exciting enough, 1,000 of us can celebrate in decadent style with this beautiful collectors' edition box set. Alongside both CD and mud-green/black vinyl gatefold versions are bonus discs containing demos of each song. Additional goodies include corresponding patches of the band's trademark kneeling skeletons, a slipmat with the same motif, and a flag of legendary fantasy artist Michael Whelan's striking new sleeve design depicting Michael Moorcock's albino warrior Elric of Melniboné. It's a classy set reflecting the magnitude of a comeback that few imagined would ever happen.
http://tinyurl.com/cirith-box

CHELSEA WOLFE POSTER
£26

Chelsea Wolfe's haunting, doom-laden folk seems tailor-made for Caitlin Mattisson's beguiling artwork, and this poster sees Mattisson riffing on the *Birth Of Violence* artwork while embellishing it with sigils, glyphs and other such mysterious arcana.
http://tinyurl.com/chelsea-print

POWER TRIP SWEATPANTS
£30

On the strength of these so-foul-they're-fantastic joggers, we'd have to say that crossover kings Power Trip have achieved some kind of sweaty-bollocked nirvana. After all, how many other bands can so clearly know their inner selves like this?
http://tinyurl.com/power-pants

OLD EMPIRE LONGSLEEVE
£20

A delightfully 90s-looking garment from gig promoters extraordinaire, Old Empire, with white block caps Gothic font shouting along black sleeves, but the phallic skeletal huntsman is far better realised than the average 90s backprint.
http://tinyurl.com/empire-shirt

KVELERTAK HOODIE

£31.90

What springs to mind if we shriek "long-legged bird attacks skull-headed snake emerging from rainbow vortex"? That we're in the grip of a terrifying acid flashback, or that David M. Cook has designed a hoodie for Kvelertak?

http://tinyurl.com/kvelertak-hoodie

BLACK PEAKS T-SHIRT

£20

Brighton's prog-metal wunderkinds have kindly designed a shirt you can admire on two levels: first for the handsome, neon-dipped landscape, but then also because the band's logo has the power to melt eyeballs from 20 paces.

http://tinyurl.com/peeks-tee

CELLAR DARLING BOOK

£43.50

Swiss folklorists Cellar Darling have really pushed the boat out with this one: a lavish, hand-numbered book celebrating 2019's *The Spell*. The 100-page tome features lyrics, illustrations, photos and insights into how the album was conjured.

http://tinyurl.com/cellar-spell

ORANSSI PAZUZU T-SHIRT

£17.50

Gaze deep into this worrying Costin Chioreanu design and you'll see eyes, eggs, fleshy striations and some sort of curious, frog-limbed hominid. A somewhat appropriate visual accompaniment to Oranssi Pazuzu's music, really.

http://tinyurl.com/oranssi-tee

UADA MOON FLAG

£17.50

Portland, Oregon's rising stars of occult, melodic black metal, Uada claim their name means 'haunted' in Latin. Dictionaries disagree, but this four-foot dripping crescent moon flag certainly has its own powerful, haunting quality.

http://tinyurl.com/uada-flag

CULT OF FIRE GIRLIE

£16

These Czech incense-and-Eastern mysticism-infused black metallers still have a few girlie tees left over from 2019's Eastern Fire Puja Tour. It's a strong, vivid design depicting a psycho-demon Vishnu brandishing Asian landmarks.

http://tinyurl.com/cultoffire-tee

CULT LEADER HOODIE

£43.50

'All warmth has gone from this place' screamed the Salt Lake City punks on 2018's *A Patient Man* album. This should help if you're in a similar predicament: a snuggly zip-up hoodie, with lovely black-and-red skull-and-rose motifs.

http://tinyurl.com/cultleader-hoodie

FLESHGOD APOCALYPSE GRINDER

£13

A classy bit of kit – jet-black and emblazoned with the tattered-but-elegant logo of Italian, imperiously erratic and dust-laden death metallers Fleshgod Apocalypse. This is described as a 'tobacco grinder', but you might find other uses for it in the coming weeks…

http://tinyurl.com/fleshgod-grinder

SAOR 'STAG' T-SHIRT

£10

If you thought *Brave* might have understated the female-embodied fierceness of the auld Scottish clans, this t-shirt from Glaswegian folk-infused black metallers Saor, featuring a warrior and a stag thinking, "That spear's not for me, right?" will put you on the right path.

https://tinyurl.com/saor-stag

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LAMB OF GOD

SYSTEM

RESET

The world is fucked. But as long as Lamb Of God can make music, they're going to use their voice to fight for justice. And that voice is angry as hell…

WORDS: KIM KELLY • PICTURES: NICK FANCHER

Randy Blythe with Art Cruz: old (road) dog, new sticks(man)

"Have you ever heard of temporary autonomous zones?" Randy Blythe asks, as we sit down in a quiet study room upstairs at the Richmond Public Library. Moments prior, *Hammer* had made an offhand comment that the sickly puce walls made it look like an interrogation room. With a bitter chuckle, he shot back, "I've been in interrogation rooms. This is a lot nicer."

He wasn't joking, either. But as Randy quickly makes apparent, he's not a man who is fazed by much anymore. As the vocalist for one of the biggest heavy metal bands in the world, an accomplished photographer, a best-selling author and a former unhappy guest of the Czech prison system, the Lamb Of God frontman has lived and seen far too much for that. Instead, two blocks away from a greasy diner where he worked the grill back in his punk rock salad days, Randy kicks back in a stiff library chair as he expounds on a theory from controversial anarchist scholar Hakim Bey.

A 'temporary autonomous zone' describes an ephemeral period of revolutionary freedom experienced outside the structures of state control. As Randy explains, that's where he sees the most viable solution for his own personal happiness – and the best kind of heavy metal experience.

"Throughout history, where people get together and go, 'There's no rules, let's all get along,' someone always comes along and crushes it," he says. "So, you enjoy that sort of freedom in that moment, because this moment is all that truly exists. I feel a good show displays the best aspects of that. There are problems, but I think it's up to the community to police itself. The group tends to handle it in a unified way, and everybody's there and free together."

That feeling is what has kept Randy going for the past 26 years of the band's existence. He hates recording, and when we visited him and his bandmates on set at the music video shoot for *Memento Mori* last night, he seemed miserable. The fact that it was happening in a freezing warehouse surely didn't help, but even at the best of times, Randy has never cared much for the trappings of his day job. He lives for playing live, and unlike some of his bandmates, he even enjoys the hours of travel in between, as well as the knowledge that the music they make is out there helping people get through their days.

"Making records isn't fun for me, not with Lamb Of God at least; I've done other projects where I've had more fun because I wasn't just screaming," he

explains. "I wish we could just record live, with everybody in there as we do it, because there's an energy that happens when we get together that you just don't get when you're listening to what they've recorded in your headphones.

"That's why my headphones have to be so ear-blaringly loud. I was having problems getting my throat to do what it does onstage several records ago, it's always been a problem, and our producer finally came up with something; he put this digital filter on the vocal track that I would hear in my headphones as I was singing that made it sound like a shitty club PA, which is what I was used to for years. Then all of a sudden my voice was like, 'OK, we know how to do this!' Somehow my hearing isn't totally destroyed."

The band's new, self-titled album is their first in five years, and the world is a vastly different place since their last outing. They're not the same band anymore, either; this record is the first to feature new drummer Art Cruz, a 31-year-old LA native with a supremely laidback vibe, a bulletproof CV (he's also played with Prong and Winds Of Plague), and a fondness for Carlos Santana. Art joined the band following the 2019 departure of founding drummer Chris Adler and has some intimidatingly big shoes to fill behind the kit, but Randy says he already fits right in, and brought a fan's perspective to the new album. "We were his favourite band when he was in high school, it's crazy!" he exclaims. "It's really cool having him in the band because we've been friends for a while. We've known him forever; he used to just ride on the tourbus with us."

Longtime Lamb Of God fans will be thrilled with the new material, which is as visceral and pummelling as anything in their world-class catalogue, and features fearsome appearances from Jamey Jasta (*Poison Dream*) and Chuck Billy (*Routes*). Those who read the lyric sheets will also recognise the band's continued commitment to the same principles they've held since they were castigating former US president, warmonger George W. Bush, on 2003's *Ashes Of The Wake.*

Randy is fed up with the US political system in its entirety. It's a sentiment that won't come as any shock to those who've followed his career or listened to his musical output, but with 2020 careening into sheer chaos at a truly alarming clip, it's hard to blame him for it, either – especially when elected officials treat matters of life or death as a game of political calculus. There's nothing specifically targeted at Trump, who Randy dismisses as "a brazen kleptocrat"; Lamb Of God prefer to land body blows on the cruel system of which he is a willing pawn. Capitalism is the disease; Trump, with his bloodthirsty authoritarian agenda, is the symptom.

"The system's broken; it doesn't work," he says with a rueful chuckle. "And the people who identify themselves so strongly as Democrats and Republicans, they're so entrenched right now – just like our Congress – that nobody is willing to meet particularly in the middle, because it's like sports

"POLITICS IS LIKE SPORTS"

RANDY BLYTHE

teams now. There's all these people who spend all this money and support this freaking team, and there's thousands of fans on this side and thousands of fans on that side, and only a very few people get paid. The team members get some money, and then the owners get really rich, so that's our system. It's nothing new, it's just more blatant and obvious."

A new crop of brilliant young anti-establishment and unapologetically left-wing bands have come to the fore in the years since LOG's last record, from Power Trip to Dawn Ray'd, but *Lamb Of God* makes it clear that these OGs still have plenty to say – and they intend for their message to endure through however many presidential election cycles the US has left. "Everybody knows already that I don't like Trump; I've said that since before he was elected, so why on earth would I write a Trump-bashing record?" Randy explains. "The situation is so ridiculous and protean and constantly changing that there's nothing to put your finger on – you can't pick one topical issue to explore. The whole record is a snapshot of where we are in so-called 'developed' countries in the western world, and what I see as the root of it."

In Randy's view, that culprit is the rampant consumerism that has held a vice-grip on Western culture since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of the middle class. "I'm not saying it was great when there were rich people and everybody else was a peasant living in a burlap sack, but things changed," he says. "In any society where your measure of self-worth or happiness is determined by what goods you own, you're fucked, because when you die, it's all gone. [American entrepreneur] Malcolm

Lamb Of God (left to right): Art Cruz, John Campbell, Randy Blythe, Mark Morton, Willie Adler

“‘DON’T DISCUSS POLITICS’? READ SOME SABBATH LYRICS, MORON!”

RANDY BLYTHE

Forbes used to say, 'Whoever dies with the most toys, wins', and I'm like, 'You win *what*?' You died with a bunch of shit? Who cares? You can die happy with just enough to survive, people do it all the time."

Randy fake-groans when we bring up politics, but is ready with a thoughtful, often profane answer to each question lobbed his way. His anti-capitalist worldview was shaped by punk rock, which gave him a leg up on many metalheads of his generation; while 80s metal dudes were squabbling over genre distinctions, Randy and his punk mates were busy giving Nazis the boot from local gigs.

"The metal community right now as it exists owes the punk rock world a great debt – all the fun stuff, all the touring routes, everything goes back to the DIY efforts of Black Flag and all those bands in the early days," he says. "I resisted saying we were a metal band for years, because when we came up, we were more grind-influenced, with ties to the punk scene. We were playing warehouses and squats, particularly in West Philadelphia, with a bunch of punk rock bands. *That's* the world I come from."

Despite his punk pedigree, he doesn't identify as an anarchist ("It seems rather utopian to me"). His own political leanings definitely veer left, though, and the ongoing debate within the metal community over whether or not the genre should be 'political' drives him up the wall.

"When people are like, 'Don't discuss politics, stick to playing guitar,' it's like, 'You fucking idiot, do you know nothing about the history of music?'" he says with no small measure of incredulity. "Not just punk and metal, but music in general. Read some Black Sabbath lyrics, you fucking morons! Sometimes I just want to kick back and listen to Cannibal Corpse and have a non-alcoholic beer, and that's OK, there's a place for that, but if you want something that's just entertainment and doesn't have any weight or message or meaning, listen to Top 40 music. Listen to something about nothing. Don't listen to our type of music. Go fuck yourself."

The library is around the corner from the Virginia governor's mansion, an imposing building where Randy and guitarist Mark Morton once worked as roofers, and a few blocks up from the State Capitol building. Several weeks before our chat, the Capitol grounds had been flooded with a heavily armed hodgepodge of gun rights advocates and right-wing extremists infuriated by the governor's attempts to pass

new gun control legislation. Randy missed the rally (he was on a surfing trip at the time), but says he would have otherwise been in attendance documenting the spectacle.

He was also out of town during 2017's deadly Unite The Right neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville, but as it happened, he'd lent a camera to a close friend to use that day. "As he stepped into an alleyway to check his shots, he heard this revving sound," Randy recalls. "He looked up and saw the car drive through the crowd of people and kill Heather Heyer."

This writer was there that day and a witness to the carnage. It felt like a load-bearing pillar in American society was crumbling, and that brokenness hasn't abated; it's only gotten worse. But Randy (who was born in Maryland and split his formative years between Virginia and North Carolina) wanted to be clear that events like these aren't a reflection of his adopted hometown, a bohemian little city known more for its university arts scene and underground music scene than its politics.

"HE SAW THE CAR DRIVE THROUGH AND KILL HER"

RANDY BLYTHE

"To be fair to the great Commonwealth of Virginia, the gun rally was promoted by the insane far right-wing; nutty people were spreading all sorts of misinformation on the internet, trying to get things really riled up here," he explains. "Thousands of people came from out of state with guns. It was crazy."

Despite evidence to the contrary, Randy swears he isn't serious *all* the time. He laughs a lot, and when he's off the heavy metal clock, he surfs, goes to shows and spends time with family. He's recently returned from a surfing trip at an "undisclosed location" in South America where he spent a month off the grid. He treasures his autonomy, and his ability to slip in and out of the public eye. Randy has been a metal household name for decades, but one gets the impression that he still isn't used to the attention. Though fans may disagree, he still refers to himself as a "budget rockstar," and even with his greying dreads hidden under a cap and spectacles obscuring his sharp features, he's often recognised around town.

"Yeah I get recognised a lot, and yeah I get to do cool stuff, but I'm still not a millionaire, I live a normal life, I drive a used truck," he says. "I get recognised more on the street in LA and London, and people are more excited. Here, people know who we are, and they're like, 'Oh, there goes the dude from Lamb Of God, I think he washed dishes at a bar I used to drink at;" because it's true. The only two times it really bums me out is if I'm eating, or when I'm with my wife or my mom. If someone comes up like, 'I fuckin' love your band!' and I'm like, dude, this is my *mom* – I don't say the f-bomb around her! This is not a metal show, we're at the shoe store, please restrain yourself. I'm a normal human being, and as such I deserve that level of respect. Just because I'm in a band you like doesn't mean you should scream 'fuck' around my mom!"

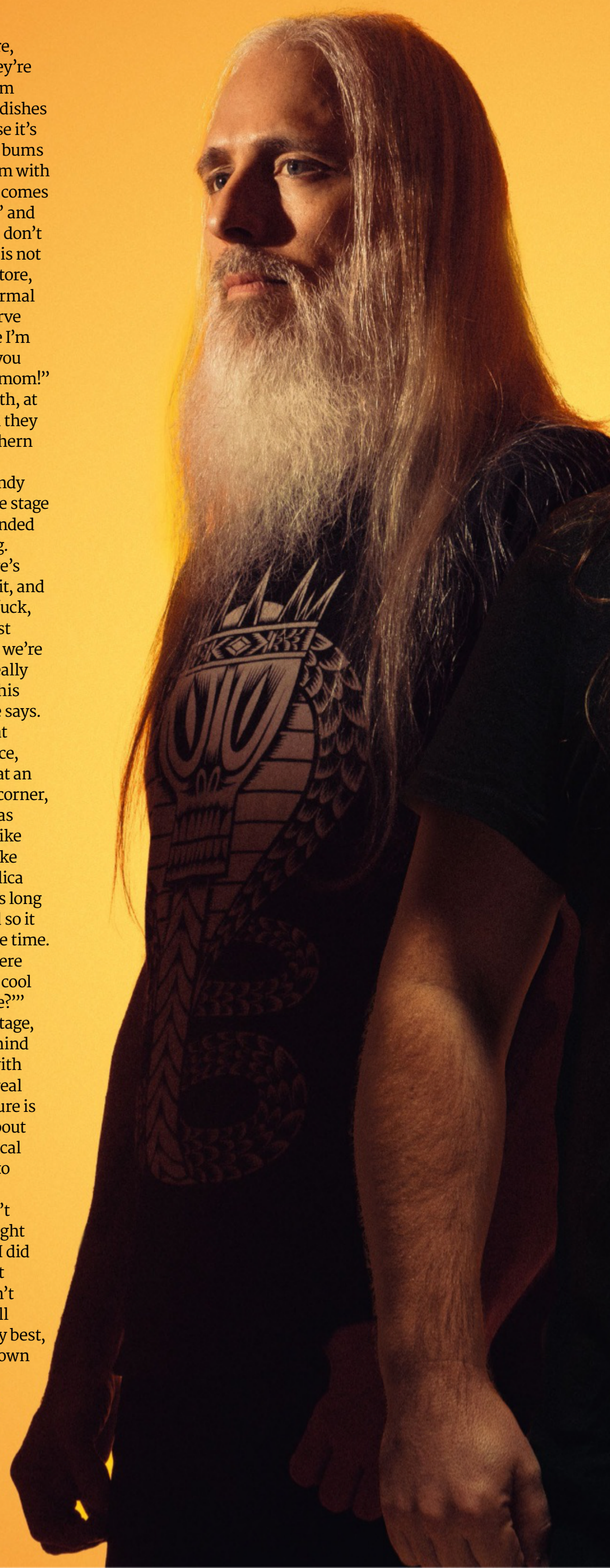
The perks are hard to argue with, at least. He tells a story about when they played Hellfest in 2019, and Southern rock icons Lynyrd Skynyrd were playing directly before them. Randy planted himself on the side of the stage as they noodled through an extended version of *Free Bird*, singing along.

"And then we played, and there's 70,000 people there going apeshit, and I'm like, what the fuck, Lynyrd Skynyrd just opened for me and we're in France, this is really strange! How did this happen to me?" he says. "We're right here at Second St. and Grace, and I used to cook at an all-night diner right around the corner, the 11pm to 7am shift, and lived as a vampire on no money. It's not like we had this moment where it's like BOOM, we're touring with Metallica and making money; it's been this long very gradual upward incline, and so it doesn't seem as weird most of the time. But you have these moments where you think, 'This is really fucking cool but it's really crazy. Is this my life?'"

Whether he's tearing it up onstage, documenting the world from behind a lens, or just shooting the shit with his Richmond homies, the only real certainty that lies in Randy's future is that he will keep speaking out about what's right, spreading the political punk gospel, and doing his part to make our world a little bit better.

"My dad and my mom, we don't agree on everything but they taught me right from wrong," he says. "I did not always do the right thing, but I always felt guilty. And I still don't always do the right thing. I'm still a human being, but I'm trying my best, goddamnit. I'm an old, beaten-down tired man, but I'm trying."

***LAMB OF GOD* IS DUE FOR RELEASE ON JUNE 19 VIA NUCLEAR BLAST**



LOG's string theorists:
John, Mark and Willie

ART ATTACK

Art Cruz has taken up the sticks from Chris Adler. So what's it like joining one of metal's most legendary bands?

You've been friends with your now-bandmates for more than a decade, but now you're a full member. How does that feel?
"These are exciting times, and it's all happening so fast! Life's a full-circle situation sometimes. The first time I saw Lamb Of God was on Gojira's first-ever tour in America; I remember waiting in line for eight hours to get into the show, and buying a bootleg shirt outside. This is a dream come true."

This is your first record with Lamb Of God. What was the recording process like?
"I might've been the secret weapon, I swear! I was able to come in and be like, what does a *fan* want now? There were a lot of things on this record where I'm shocked that they took my opinion into consideration, and now everybody's stoked on it. There were a couple of songs where I was able to get a little funky with the hi-hat, definitely some Santana work with the toms, there's a lot of Sepultura-style tribal stuff – I definitely ripped off Iggor!"

This is your dream gig, but Lamb Of God is also a well-oiled machine. Are there ever moments where it feels like a job?
"The work part is the travel schedule, and the lack of sleep. As I get older, my body's telling me, 'Alright man, you gotta slow the fuck down.' But if you feel like it's work when you're playing shows, you shouldn't be doing it anymore – that's the fun part! And for me, the most exciting part was writing the record, being able to be a part of that and putting in the hours. That's work, but the kind where you're like, 'I'm so thankful this is my job!'"

THE 50 GREATEST METAL BANDS EVER

AS VOTED FOR BY YOU!

Sick of having office scraps over who the best bands in the world are, we decided to put the question to you – our lovely readers. You didn't disappoint. The votes flooded in, and we're proud to present the definitive list of The 50 Greatest Metal Bands Ever. But who was shunned and who made the cut? Read on to find out…

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE, ELEANOR GOODMAN

50 KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

The ultimate melodic metalcore band

Not only have Killswitch been bringing us the best in melodic metalcore since 1999, they've blessed us with two amazing frontmen. Starting out with Jesse Leach, we got the now-classic album *Alive Or Just Breathing*. Switching over to Howard Jones, we got the truly stunning *The End Of Heartache* – not to mention a much-loved revival of Dio song *Holy Diver*. When Howard left in 2011, many assumed the Massachusetts heavyweights were done, but the surprise return of Jesse injected new life into the band and they continue to go from strength to strength. Throughout the turmoil, they've also had guitarist and secret weapon Adam D, whose puerile humour belies sharp songwriting and production skills. Whether you're Team Howard or Team Jesse or simply both (the pair shared vocals on big ol' brodown *The Signal Fire* from last year's *Atonement*), nobody does it like these guys.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***The End Of Heartache*** **(2004)**

49 HELLOWEEN

Pioneering German power metallers paved the way

Let's face it: you just can't fuck with *Keeper Of The Seven Keys: Part II*. Hailing from Hamburg, Helloween were one of the biggest metal bands of the 80s, and their influence has trickled down to everyone from Dragonforce to Nightwish, and even Fozzy frontman/wrestler Chris Jericho (his name actually comes from Helloween's debut album, *Walls Of Jericho*). Sadly, that classic *Keeper...* line-up fractured soon after the album's release in 1988, leading to increasing tensions in the band, numerous personnel changes and hit-and-miss experimentation with their sound. But in 2017, much to the fans' surprise and delight, original guitarist Kai Hansen and vocalist Michael Kiske joined the current incarnation of the band for the Pumpkins United World Tour. It lasted for 14 months. A new album is currently in the works, due for release sometime later this year, and we're expecting great things from the band who set the gold standard for power metal.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Keeper Of The Seven Keys: Part II*** **(1988)**

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE: PRESS/JOHN McMURTRIE. HELLOWEEN: PRESS.

48 NINE INCH NAILS

The captains of industrial

When Trent Reznor started his furious one-man industrial project in the 1980s, few could have predicted his transformation to acclaimed soundtrack composer. Throughout the 90s, his angst-fuelled anthems and unsettling ambient outings plumbed the darkest depths of human nature, reflecting his unique artistic impulses and an addiction to drugs. The 00s have seen a calmer Trent – clean, married with children, fit and healthy – and a corresponding work ethic when it comes to his music, which nevertheless continues to explore breakdown and unease. In 2016 he brought Atticus Ross on board as the only other full-time member, and the pair's award-winning atmospheric soundtrack work on the likes of *The Social Network* and *Gone Girl* has bled into NIN's music. The surprise release of *Ghosts V: Together* and *Ghosts VI: Locusts* in March showcases that gut-wrenching happy/unsettling dynamic that NIN straddle so well.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***The Downward Spiral*** **(1994)**

47 TRIVIUM

Florida's finest just won't quit

Few bands have persisted as strongly as Trivium, and fewer still have come back after twice losing momentum. *Shogun* (2008) compensated for *The Crusade* (2006), while 2017's *The Sin And The Sentence* course-corrected them after *Vengeance Falls* (2013) and *Silence In The Snow* (2015). *The Sin...* showed what they can really do when they get in a room and write uninhibitedly, without overthinking it, and this year's *What The Dead Men Say* looks set to continue their winning streak. Meanwhile, Matt Heafy has become one of metal's brightest and most-likeable personalities, now at ease with the role of frontman instead of tripping over his ambitions. His second job as a Twitch streamer has seen him putting out fun, zeitgeisty covers and introducing Trivium to a cohort of gamers. They are a true 21st century metal band and, only in their mid-30s, have many great years ahead.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***The Sin And The Sentence*** **(2017)**

46 FAITH NO MORE

The oddballs who helped define the 90s

When Faith No More released *Sol Invictus* in 2015, the metal world rejoiced to have such a distinctive talent back in its ranks. Our love affair had started in the early 80s, but really ramped up when Mike Patton joined in '88 and the band became an unstoppable force, hitting paydirt with the song *Epic* and quickly conquering MTV and the charts. Their particular brand of funk metal seemed like something that could only happen in the 90s – a fusion of slap bass, attitude and mega-riffs that often veered into uncharted territories. When they disbanded just 10 years later, it felt like they'd gone before their time. It was a brilliant surprise, then, when they embarked on a reunion tour in 2009. There's no sign of a follow-up to *Sol Invictus*, but we're happy to see them back on the road.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***The Real Thing*** **(1989)**

NIN: PRESS. TRIVIUM: PERSS. FNM: GETTY.

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

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45 IN FLAMES

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Swedish melodic death metal innovators

When In Flames released *Reroute To Remain* in 2002, a bunch of keyboard warriors waged war on the band for veering away from the Gothenburg sound and writing a bunch of shining hooks. They had even toured with Slipknot – the sellouts! *Metal Hammer* got in on the act, going to their rehearsal studio to grill them about it four years later, following 2004's *Soundtrack To Your Escape* and 2006's just-released *Come Clarity*. The band were self-assured and content, as they should have been – they'd had it right all along. This was the album that introduced them to a bunch of keen young metal fans, putting them on an upwards trajectory. In 2020, they continue to innovate and even have their own festival held in an actual castle. Meanwhile, the trolls are probably still sitting idle in their pants.

Were you hurt by people thinking your last two records had seen you stray from 'the path'?
Anders Fridén (vocals): "No. I get hurt by people not understanding our purpose, or when they use our voice to say, 'This is why the band decided to use this because…' they have no clue!" Most of the time we laugh. If you like what we do, great. If you don't, there's shitloads of other bands for you to listen to. I don't care."

But did you get disappointed when your favourite bands evolved? Do you understand why people thought those records had done that, and maybe why this record [*Come Clarity*] is you coming back to them?
Anders: "I do understand, in that I did get disappointed when some of my favourite bands made a record I didn't like. The difference is though, I didn't go on their website and talk shit about them. I didn't care. I listened to something else. This work represents where we are today, it's the best thing we've ever done. I think this album strikes a perfect balance between melody and aggression. If people don't like it, I don't care!"

It seemed like people almost resented you for having ambition. For wanting to evolve…
Björn Gelotte (guitars): "Er… er, how do I answer that? Do I need to?"

It's up to you. But it's going to get pretty dull if we sit here in silence.
Anders: "We don't have a goal like selling a certain amount of records. We don't have an image to uphold. We're very much ourselves! Ha ha! We're just a bit older now."

And if anyone else likes it, it's just a bonus?
Anders: "Sure, yeah. We do what we do. Once in a while you're in the moment where it's happening and then 10 years later you're back again. I can honestly see a straight line from the first record to this one…"

But do you feel answerable in any way to anyone?
Björn: "No. We only care that those in the band are happy with what we do. We don't have any label to please. Or any management. It's only us. You have to stick to your guns. You don't want to look to what's trendy or cool. You'll never be the leaders, or the first. We don't have to answer to anyone other than ourselves."
Anders: "We've now had eight albums in 12 years. How many other bands who play the kind of music we do would keep people interested in what they do?"
Björn: "How many bands would still be going? It's like I said – we only try to please ourselves."

ESSENTIAL ALBUM:
Reroute To Remain (2002)

IN FLAMES' TOUR DATES HAVE BEEN POSTPONED. SEE WWW.INFLAMES.COM FOR UPDATES

IN FLAMES: PRESS. WORDS: JAMES JAM.

44 FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH

Las Vegas kings come out swinging

Five Finger Death Punch are one of modern metal's greatest success stories. In just 15 years, they've jumped from club shows to arenas, off the back of fist-pumping anthems and gigantic, lighter-waving power ballads. They've managed to bring out *eight* albums. And let's not forget their celebrity mates – Rob Halford, Max Cavalera, Maria Brink and Jamey Jasta all popped up on 2013's *The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell, Volume I*. Sure, they've had setbacks and internal squabbles along the way, mostly relating to singer Ivan Moody's well-publicised addictions, but thankfully he's out of rehab and celebrating sobriety in his addresses from the stage. Detractors like to deride them for putting out basic bro-metal, but their songs connect with people from across metal's universe and beyond. As is the driving message throughout their songs, you can't keep 5FDP down.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell, Volume I*** **(2013)**

43 SEPULTURA

Connected to their roots, bloody roots

Here they were: four hungry young Brazilians determined to fuck shit up. Brothers Max and Iggor Cavalera, guitarist Andreas Kisser and bassist Paolo Jr. mixed tribal beats with crushing heaviness to produce a groove metal sound like no other. Their run of albums with Roadrunner – *Beneath The Remains* (1989), *Arise* (1991), *Chaos A.D.* (1993) and *Roots* (1996) – is quite possibly the finest in our history. While Max's acrimonious departure in December 1996 was a blow to fans and stands as the defining moment of their past, they didn't let it stop them. Pushing on with Derrick Green as frontman, they've released a series of solid records, despite suffering another setback when Iggor bowed out in 2006. To watch the modern-day incarnation is to watch a band completely in love with what they do, and determined to keep making music, with this year's *Quadra* album among their greatest works.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Roots*** **(1996)**

42 ANTHRAX

Perpetually caught in a mosh

The term 'thrash metal' literally came from an Anthrax song, music journalist Malcolm Dome taking the title *Metal Thrashing Mad* and giving a name to a whole new genre. Sitting alongside Metallica, Megadeth and Slayer in metal's 'Big 4', New York City's Anthrax have often come off as the board-short-wearing kid brother, most responsible for the emergence of the hardcore thrash and speed metal movement of the 80s. Melding metal's hallmarks with the furious pace of hardcore and punk, they sounded cutting-edge and urgent. They pushed genre boundaries further when they teamed up with Public Enemy in 1991 for crossover hit *Bring The Noise*, uniting two factions in one rebellious goal. Despite numerous line-up changes – not least the singer tag-team of Joey Belladonna and John Bush – we've always been able to rely on the band to deliver head-crushing riffs and made-for-air-guitar solos. Thanks, Anthrax.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM:
Among The Living **(1987)**

PRESS.

41 WITHIN TEMPTATION

Symphonic metal never sounded so slick

The Dutch crew are symphonic metal's poppiest of bands, knowing how to expertly deploy a mega-chorus so it hits you right between the eyes. And they're not afraid to borrow from other, more mainstream genres: see their cover of David Guetta's chart-bothering *Titanium* and their surprise team-up with Xzibit for the song *And We Run*, from 2014's *Hydra*. Yet dynamic duo Sharon den Adel and guitarist/husband Robert Westerholt admitted they'd almost called it quits after *Hydra* due to a lack of ideas. Thank heavens they didn't. Last year's album *Resist* proved they still had plenty left in the tank, bringing their sound up to date in spectacular style. Hearing those songs on the rescheduled Worlds Collide Tour with Evanescence gives us something to look forward to once the lockdown is over.

To keep us entertained in the meantime, Sharon has been live-streaming performances, teaching us how to make apple turnovers via Instagram (apple turnovers are metal), and updating a playlist called The Corona Quarantine | Sweat It Out Workout. We gave her a shout to see how the band have been coping during these strange times, and why it's important to her to stay connected. Excitingly, it sounds like their creativity's still firing, and there's new music in the works as well…

You said that after *Hydra* you came to a point where you didn't know if Within Temptation would make another album. Where do you think you'd be now if that had happened?
Sharon den Adel: "Good question! I think I might be doing something totally different music-wise: different music, different band. But it didn't happen, so I don't really know."

How are things in the WT camp now generally? Apart from the coronavirus situation, of course…
"Well, everybody was preparing for the tour of course. But now that it's on hold, you start being creative again. We've started writing music and are now busy with thinking of how we can entertain our fans from home. We have to get creative in a different way!"

You've been very proactive in keeping in touch with your fans during the coronavirus pandemic – is that important to you?
"Of course, we try to do what we do best and that's entertain people. We try to make new content to entertain our fans so it'll be easier for them to stay home."

Do you actually like making playlists?
"I really liked making our 'The Corona Quarantine | Sweat It Out Workout' playlist. Nobody knew I was going to do something like that and I wanted to bring some entertainment to our fans in a light-hearted way, with a playlist for people to seriously work out to in a high intensity program. It was fun to do… maybe I'll make one more if people really start listening to it."

What makes a good playlist?
"A good flow between every song!"

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Resist*** **(2019)**

HEAR SHARON'S PLAYLIST AT TINYURL.COM/WTPLAYLIST. THEIR WORLDS COLLIDE TOUR WITH EVANESCENCE HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL SEPTEMBER – SEE WWW.WORLDSCOLLIDETOUR.NET

PRESS.

40 MÖTLEY CRÜE

Hair metal icons who survived to tell the tale

These days, Mötley Crüe are known for their notorious exploits as much as their music. Coming of age in the hair metal excesses of the 80s, there was barely a girl they didn't fuck and a drug they didn't do. Recent biopic *The Dirt* introduced them to Generation Z and, surprisingly, managed to transcend cancel culture with its story of the band who came from nothing and conquered Sunset Strip, before taking on the world. Of course, there's also the music. Anthems such as *Kickstart My Heart* – about bassist Nikki Sixx's near-fatal overdose – and *Girls, Girls, Girls* are just as catchy today, and though their 'final tour' saw them looking a little worn around the edges, their comeback tour has still been greeted with a mania that few bands from their era can inspire. In the annals of rock'n'roll, they are the authentic stuff of legend.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Dr. Feelgood*** **(1989)**

39 MARILYN MANSON

He is the God Of Fuck

'Do you love your guns? God? The government?' never before has an artist captured the dirty underbelly of middle America like Marilyn Manson. Growing up in Ohio, going to Christian school and clocking the hypocrisy of what he saw around him, music-journalist-turned-musician Marilyn Manson set out to be the ultimate provocateur. Drawing on heroes such as David Bowie and getting a leg-up from Nine Inch Nails mastermind Trent Reznor, while putting together a debauched stage show that drew on fascist iconography, by the turn of the century he was public enemy number one for conservatives. When they blamed him for 1999's Columbine massacre, he responded with grace. Though his shock power has dimmed in recent times as society has moved on, he remains a true artist, experimenting with outlaw country and maintaining a penchant for clever lyrics and literary/occult references. Manson isn't done with us yet, and we're not done with Manson.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Holy Wood*** **(2000)**

FROM THE ARCHIVE

38 DEFTONES

Alt-metallers who defy categorisation

Are Deftones metal? It's a question we asked back in summer 1996, when *Hammer* writer Katherine Turman interviewed guitarist Stephen Carpenter. After releasing their debut *Adrenaline*, appearing in iconic movie *The Crow*, and playing with everyone from Ozzy to Monster Magnet, the Californians were on the up, but were yet to break big. They got lumped into nu metal, but continued to sonically evolve, even through the unimaginable loss of bassist Chi Cheng following a road accident. Put simply, Deftones are Deftones.

Deftones came to life in 1989, but frontman Chino Moreno and Stephen Carpenter had been friends since the age of 11 or 12. "The people I skated with [Chino] knew, and we'd jam at our house, 'cos I had gear in my garage. I was always serious about music, but the reality was that we were just some kids who loved music and were jamming. Chino hooked me up with Abe [Cunningham, drums] one day, 'cos he knew he was bad-ass. Abe was like 15, and he was just going off. I was like 18. I was like, 'Damn, I wish I was that good when I was young!'" says Stephen with a laugh.

"We started jamming. We didn't do anything serious, just played like Death Angel songs. And one day we said, 'Why don't we have Chino come over and sing with us?' He could sing Danzig, like he did when we used to jam *Twist Of Cain*. At first we were just happy we had someone singing. I didn't know what he was doing, or care, but it was a voice over the music so it made it sound full, and I was like, 'This is fresh.' We just kept on going."

As might be surmised by the musical names Stephen drops, the youngsters were greatly influenced by metal. And now? Ask him if Deftones have been called metal, and he answers without hesitation. "Oh yeah, we are metal. There is no doubt about it. Just name an alternative band that isn't metal; it's just not pounding metal.

"There's no doubt about it. Soundgarden's metal. I've never looked at them as alternative. Temple Of The Dog – it's metal, it's just not pounding metal. Pearl Jam – they're metal who happened to hit the mainstream at the right time. And they got this so-called 'alternative' thing. Eddie Vedder stopped rockin' out and got real cool, and he can pose on stage. I don't hate Pearl Jam," the guitarist hastens to add. "I think they are a great band. But I think alternative got blown out of proportion to what it really is."

Stephen is not against categorisation per se, but resents that metal somehow go the big heave-ho in the United States. "Categories are great, because you need to be able to identify things. I don't know of a better means to describe bands, but if I knew I think I'd be rich. My goal is to get people to have open minds and give everything a fair chance. It's sad when people don't like something because they think it's going to be metal or rock."

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***White Pony*** **(2000)**

MÖTLEY CRÜE: PRESS/MARK WEISS. MARILYN MANSON: PRESS. DEFTONES: PRESS/FRANK MADDOCKS. WORDS: KATHERINE TURMAN

37 DISTURBED

From sweary nu metallers to media darlings

Who'd have thought that the band who wrote metal club anthem *The Sickness* would end up being beamed into middle America's living rooms? Originally coming across as bone-headed and egotistical, David Draiman grew into his role as charismatic frontman, and proved he had one hell of a voice to back it up. Their crunchy anthems are perfect for rock radio, always lifted by those soaring tones, whether he's singing about religion and suicide prevention or, um, sparking up a joint. Disturbed have never cared about their critics: their mission is to please their brothers and sisters, their blood. They've long shown a fondness for cover songs, and Simon & Garfunkel's *The Sound Of Silence* finally brought that mainstream approval, via an appearance on US talk show *Conan*. The video for that song has been viewed *600,000,000* times.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***The Sickness*** **(2000)**

36 AMON AMARTH

The band who supersized Viking metal

Sure, there are lots of Viking metal bands out there. But do any of those metal bands have a full-on longship on stage with them? Do any of them have a Viking helmet drum riser? Do any of them have fire, all the way from Valhalla? Didn't think so. Throughout 11 albums, Swedish death metallers Amon Amarth have let their Viking flag fly free, always pushing onwards with wind in their sails and Odin by their side. This single-minded focus is what's taken them from club shows to Bloodstock headliners. Frontman Johan Hegg lives the life so hard that 2016's *Jomsviking* concept album was based on an epic story that he wrote, and he's even co-founded a Viking jewellery company called Grimfrost. The crowd 'row-pit' row-alongs that are now customary when they play live are proof that there's a lot of love for these Berserkers, which is only continuing to grow.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Twilight Of The Thunder God*** **(2008)**

DISTURBED: PRESS/TRAVIS SHINN. AMON AMARTH: PRESS/JONATHAN WEINER.

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35 PARADISE LOST

Purveyors of Northern misery

Paradise Lost are national treasures, having given us three decades of the most melancholic music imaginable, touching the deepest parts of our souls. Originally starting out as a death metal band, they drew on the doomy likes of Sabbath and Pentagram to transform into something darker, culminating in '91's seminal *Gothic*. By then, a northern scene had coalesced around them and the likes of Anathema and My Dying Bride, all signed to Peaceville Records. Their impact shouldn't be understated; not only did their own music continue to evolve in various doomy, sludgy and atmospheric ways, they influenced a whole host of other bands, such as Cradle Of Filth, HIM, Nightwish, Lacuna Coil, Katatonia and Moonspell. Without Paradise Lost, we might have all been stuck listening to happy music. Gross.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Gothic*** **(1991)**

34 SABATON

Conquering the metal scene, one campaign at a time

Like Amon Amarth, Sabaton just won't quit. Once they'd locked into their theme of war, founders Joakim Brodén and Pär Sundström pushed ahead with their campaign, making it greater and greater. But while punters turned up for the tank onstage, they stayed for the rousing power metal anthems: *Primo Victoria, Ghost Division, To Hell And Back…* the band have survived so long thanks to the brotherhood between Joakim and Pär. While Joakim is the chest-beating action man clad in his signature aviators and steel-panelled vest, Pär draws up the battle plans, and is the mastermind behind operations such as Sabaton's own festival and cruise. The Swedes even have their own history channel, for fuck's sake. And they don't just have a tank now – they have a full re-enactment set-up, complete with pyro and a biplane organ. Now they've claimed Wembley Arena, there's no stopping their conquest.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM:
The Great War **(2019)**

PRESS.

33 GHOST

If you have Ghost, you have everything...

On paper, it sounds mad. A band fronted by a fake pope called Papa Emeritus, who dies after every album and is replaced by a church-appointed successor. Onstage, it's gloriously madder. There's Papa holding a metal mass in his ornate robes, backed by a band of Nameless Ghouls dressed in sharp black-and-white suits, who work the crowd into ecstasy under the cover of flashing lights and lasers. And that's without mentioning the music videos and YouTube episodes that keep the story going, revealing glimpses into the hierarchy of the church and mysteries that have yet to unfold. But Ghost would have quickly been condemned as heretics if they were just about image. Blending 70s occult rock, shiny retro pop and modern metal, they've managed to crank out some of the biggest anthems around, all under the watchful eye of mastermind Tobias Forge. He deserves that sceptre and crown.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Prequelle*** **(2018)**

32 TYPE O NEGATIVE

A vital part of the gothic bloodline

Forming in New York in 1989, Type O Negative were catnip for goths. It helped that frontman Peter Steele looked the part – a towering, six-foot-something man with long black hair and a long… well, he once posed naked for *Playgirl*. In Type O Negative's lyrics, he wore his heart on his sleeve and had his tongue wedged firmly in his cheek, singing about his romantic relationships with women and the intense jealously of betrayal, all while retaining a black sense of humour. In his personal life, this would eventually cause problems; he did a stint in prison for hitting a love rival. Signing initially to Roadrunner, Type O Negative became one of its great successes, combining doom metal with melodic hooks and a strong image – you can almost hear the green lights shining in the darkness of their music. Tragically, Peter passed away from an aortic aneurysm in 2010, but his legacy lives on.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***October Rust*** **(1996)**

31 KING DIAMOND

Bow down to your ruler

That distinctive corpsepaint. That familiar snarl. *That* histrionic voice. There's no doubt about it, Denmark's King Diamond is an unmistakable and unstoppable force in heavy metal. Fronting Mercyful Fate, he cut a striking figure, drawing inspiration from the dark arts of Alice Cooper. He brought his fascination with the occult to landmark 1983 debut album *Melissa*, and the song *Into The Coven* went on the PMRC's notorious 'Filthy Fifteen' list. But King Diamond's dark obsessions proved too much even for the band, and he embarked on a solo career, spinning weird tales in grandiose fashion, and even meeting *The Satanic Bible* author Anton LaVey in 1988. He has truly earned his place in this Top 50 – his image and spirit has influenced countless of musicians in our world, from Cradle Of Filth, to Opeth's Mikael Åkerfeldt, to Ghost's Tobias Forge. Even now, he's still out for blood: he's set to release a new solo record, *and* Mercyful Fate's first new album in two decades.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Abigail*** **(1987)**

PRESS.

30 RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

Metal's greatest rabble-rousers

The most political band in metal, Rage Against The Machine have never been afraid to take a stand. They *shut down the New York Stock Exchange*. They staged a naked protest at Lollapalooza. And they're responsible for thousands of people worldwide screaming, *'Fuck you I won't do what you tell me!'* – the iconic refrain from *Killing In The Name*, a song that ended up as the UK Christmas No.1 16 years after release. The resulting free concert in London's Finsbury Park is one we'll never forget. With increasing worldwide political discontent, we were thrilled when three-quarters of the band returned as Prophets Of Rage, teaming up with Public Enemy's Chuck D and DJ Lord, plus Cypress Hill's B-Real. But we're even more stoked now the real thing have announced a comeback. Their appearances might have been postponed due to the coronavirus, but we know they're going to be incendiary and well worth the wait.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Rage Against The Machine*** **(1992)**

29 LINKIN PARK

Nu metal's game-changers

Following Chester Bennington's tragic death in July 2017, Linkin Park's future is uncertain, but there's no doubt he leaves behind a stunning legacy. *Hybrid Theory* alone stands as one of few perfect debut albums, taking all the hallmarks of nu metal – pop choruses, a DJ, rapping, melodic riffs – and tying them up in one neat package for the disaffected. When they played it in full at Download 2014, it was no less potent. Since changing musical tack on 2007's *Minutes To Midnight*, Linkin Park have shown a taste for experimentation and collaboration that's been their one constant, shedding some fans with subsequent releases but also gaining new ones. Their final album, 2017's *One More Light*, even featured Pusha T and Stormzy. Knowing what we know now, its title track is a difficult listen. And while they might have strayed from metal's heartland, Linkin Park will always be one of us.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Hybrid Theory*** **(2000)**

28 NIGHTWISH

Eccentric Finns who dream big

Has there ever been a metal band as extra as Nightwish? Since emerging in the 90s as part of a burgeoning wave of symphonic metal, the Finns have gone bigger and harder than all of their peers, bandleader Tuomas Holopainen running with his wild ideas and never acknowledging limitations. A record with a full orchestra? Sure, you got it. A guest spot from evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins? No problem. A double album about our relationship with nature? Consider it done. And that's without mentioning the costumes and staging of their epic arena shows. The public dismissal of Tarja Turunen and the departure of Anette Olzon plunged them into offstage drama, but with Floor Jansen now at the mic they've enjoyed eight years of stability and some of their most successful years yet. Nightwish always keep us on our toes, and we're hyped to see where their dreams will take them next.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Endless Forms Most Beautiful*** **(2015)**

RATM: PRESS. LINKIN PARK: PRESS/JAMES MINCHIN. NIGHTWISH: PRESS/TIM TRONCKOE.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

27 MESHUGGAH

Always ahead of the curve

The Swedes have twisted our brains in knots for the last 33 years, and we love them for it. We could have endless debates over their best album, making the case for the era-defining *Destroy Erase Improve* (1995) or the eight-string-guitar-fuelled *Nothing* (2002), but it was 2008's straight-up *obZen* that nabbed them a Swedish Grammy nomination and a 9/10 review in *Metal Hammer*. We said: 'With *obZen*, Meshuggah have unveiled a summation of their own esoteric craft and, in doing so, set a new benchmark that will surely resonate in the halls of metal's future.' We weren't wrong, considering they basically gave birth to djent. When *Hammer's* Dom Lawson caught up with the band just before release, he found them in mischievous spirits.

Meshuggah are well aware that expectations around everything that they do are ridiculously high. Just take a glance at the internet right now, and you'll see frequent heated discussions about *obZen* and the fact that the band's new songs are easily the most straightforward things Meshuggah have released in years, particularly in light of their self-released 20-minute, one-track *I* EP and 2005's 45-minute conceptual piece *Catch Thirtythree*.

"After we recorded those slabs of music, and once we got that out of our systems, it felt like the first time in a long time that we could come up with regular song structures again," says Mårten [Hagström, guitarist]. "I think a lot of people that were looking for the whole complexity thing might not like this album as much, but there's more to this than you'll hear on the first listen. You know, we can't please everyone. Our fans tend to be very quick with their judgement and they usually end up changing their minds. We can only please ourselves."

"That's right," nods Tomas [Haake, drums], a mischievous glint in his eye. "We please only ourselves. We are auto-sexual. We never please anyone else. If you need a GPS to find a woman, you're OK with us!"

Tomas is joking, of course (at least, we assume he is), but there is a sense that Meshuggah's awkwardness, their refusal to take the traditional route in their music or career, has been a source of frustration among the band's fans. A case in point was the co-headlining UK tour with The Dillinger Escape Plan that the Swedes announced and then subsequently cancelled in 2007. Having failed to play a single show in the UK – or anywhere much else, for that matter – in several years, it doesn't seem unreasonable to request a proper explanation for this latest no-show.

"Here's the official version," smiles Tomas. "We just didn't have the album ready. We initially thought we'd have it done in July and release it in November, so we could tour to support the release. July went by, August went by and we knew it wasn't going to happen because we knew we needed more time in the studio to make it as good as possible."

OK, so what's the unofficial version?

"The unofficial reason is that Ben [Weinman] of Dillinger was in love with Mårten," he deadpans. "And then I fell in love with Ben. Things were turning ugly. Everybody had slept with everybody else and it started becoming weird between us. We had to avoid that whole situation."

There's a long pause, before Tomas grins and the whole table erupts into hysterical laughter. Even the otherwise frowning and reticent Jens Kidman is cackling merrily away, as the true, gloriously juvenile reality of Meshuggah's often overlooked sense of humour is finally exposed.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: *obZen* (2008)

MESHUGGAH'S LATEST ALBUM, *THE VIOLENT SLEEP OF REASON*, IS OUT VIA NUCLEAR BLAST

PRESS. WORDS: DOM LAWSON.

26 ALICE IN CHAINS

Seattle's most metal grunge band

Despite the tragic story of grunge and their own chapter in it, which saw Layne Staley passing away from an overdose in 2002, Alice In Chains have carried on with respect and credibility. There's no doubt Layne was a talismanic frontman, his vocals howling and languid by turns, able to capture an audience with his authenticity. Unfortunately those demons he bared so readily would eventually get the better of him. When the band announced their return with William DuVall on vocals, not everyone was convinced, but 2009's resulting *Black Gives Way To Blue* was an emotionally honest document of grief and reflection, clearing the way for the band to continue anew. Since then, they've carried on making records; Jerry Cantrell's familiar vocal harmonies and grinding guitars complement William's voice, which pays homage to a legacy while maintaining his own identity. Together with Pearl Jam, they're grunge's elder statesmen.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Dirt*** **(1992)**

25 MASTODON

Supremely talented Atlantan weirdos

Ever since Mastodon unleashed *Leviathan* back in 2004, we've been hooked. A juggernaut of an album loosely based on Herman Melville's classic novel *Moby Dick*, its riffs were weightier than an anchor and bigger than, well, a whale, taking in the metallic and the progressive. Over the years, the quartet have proved themselves to have boundless imaginations, writing songs about cycloptic sasquatches and the Creature From The Black Lagoon, and even an elaborate concept album involving Russian mystic Rasputin (2009's *Crack The Skye*, which actually paid tribute to drummer Brann Dailor's late sister). We were moved when they dug deep into their souls again and addressed family illness on 2017's *Emperor Of Sand*, a stunning record that bagged them the top spot in *Hammer*'s end-of-year critics' poll. It's that combination of heart, creativity and musicianship that makes them so beloved.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Emperor Of Sand*** **(2017)**

24 AVENGED SEVENFOLD

All hail metalcore's kings

Avenged have long suffered from a perception problem. When they came screaming out of Orange County at the turn of the century, the old guard saw them as bratty metalcore upstarts who had no place in the scene. But to the younger generation, they *were* the scene. Those tattoos, the bandanas, the made-for-merch Deathbat… it was classic metal rebranded as California cool with a snarl. From those humble beginnings came true invention; The Rev's double ride technique, Synyster Gates' distinctive guitar leads, the animated video for *A Little Piece Of Heaven*. It was a horrible shock when The Rev passed away in 2009, but 2010's *Nightmare* proved they could carry on in his memory. Meanwhile, the none-more-metal *Hail To The King* and 2016's progressive *The Stage* have seen them reach new heights of development and success. Even the most hardened critic has to admit they've come of age.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***The Stage*** **(2016)**

PRESS. MASTODON: PRESS/JIMMY HUBBARD. AVENGED SEVENFOLD: PRESS/KAMERON POLLACK.

KORN: PRESS/BRIAN ZIFF.

23 KORN

Downtuned nu metal pioneers who are here to stay

Of course these Bakersfield misfits made your Top 50. From providing the soundtrack for a generation of hoodie-wearing Korn kiddies, to going on to experiment with dubstep, Korn are 13 albums down and still going strong. The return of prodigal son Brian 'Head' Welch in 2013 took them back to their old-school roots, and latest album *The Nothing* is as powerful as anything they wrote in the 90s. We grilled Head about how the band have managed to have such a long career.

What do you think about Korn making the top 50 bands ever?

Head: "You know, that's amazing. I try to keep this frame of mind of where I'm just a metal fan and a music fan. I was just a metal fan growing up as a kid. And so, all people in rock bands were just fans of the music. It's crazy to think about all the success we've had. So I'm thankful, grateful to be on the list, whatever number we are – that's a big list."

In 1994 when you guys came out, where was metal at?

"Yeah, metal was… I forget what was out there, but it was like blending into metal and rock music, and the grunge movement came out. You had bands like Pearl Jam and Nirvana, but then you had the heavier, darker bands like Alice In Chains who influenced us a lot – we just got to go on tour with them last summer – and so metal was at a place where it was still going."

Why did Korn have such an impact?

"I think because of the real, raw emotion that Jonathan had and then the sound of our guitars. Just having the seven-string was a new thing, you know? And writing songs in the low tuning that we did. There were a lot of influences that we had, like Faith No More, Rage Against The Machine, Nine Inch Nails, Alice In Chains, Prong – I could go on and on and on. But us five guys, we just clicked – we grew up together, and we came up with this sound. Steve Vai had a lot to do with it, because he invented that seven-string, so thank you to Steve Vai. We're just thankful that it happened, that we still get to go around the world and play."

Why do you think Korn have weathered so many storms?

"The fans are dedicated, and Korn means so much to people, and have got them through a really hard time in their life, so they're thankful. And I think our live show and our dedication to put on the best live show we can – we've always been known for a lot of energy and people love that. And you know, Jonathan – one of my favourite singers in the whole world is in my band, I always say. He's really unique, and people know his voice, so that's been a real gift, a huge blessing. And I don't know, man? I know God's on our side and we keep coming back! And we're thankful to the fans that keep coming out to the shows."

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Follow The Leader*** **(1998)**

THE NOTHING **IS OUT NOW VIA ROADRUNNER**

22 GUNS N' ROSES

The band who revolutionised rock in the 80s... even if we didn't exactly realise it at the time

These days, GN'R are the stuff of legend, so it's no surprise they're on this list. But when Axl and co released debut *Appetite For Destruction* in '87, esteemed *Hammer* scribe Dave Ling wasn't impressed. Rating it 4/10, he thought it was too derivative of 70s rock, though did concede *Welcome To The Jungle* was 'magnificent' and *Paradise City* was the 'bastard son of *Train Kept A-Rollin'*. He condemned their lyrics for being 'content to perpetuate the basic rock'n'roll desperado themes of law-breaking, boozing and endless wimmen'. He continued, 'Two great songs and a few decent ideas doesn't constitute a good album.' Oof. We asked Dave whether he's since changed his mind.

How much did you know about the band beforehand?
Dave Ling: "*Appetite*... came out in July '87, so by then I would have seen them play a fairly mediocre gig at the Marquee Club a couple of weeks earlier, though lead-in times ensured it wouldn't have spun my view of the album. I had read a lot about them, obviously. I was very suspicious of the level of superlatives being thrown at them."

What led you to say it was a second-rate reheating of Hanoi Rocks?
"Beyond the tracks I raved about – *Paradise City* and *Welcome To The Jungle* – it felt it too derivative, and, honestly, not very special. It just didn't live up to the hype."

Did you cop any flack for your opinion?
"Apart from Axl calling me up angrily at *Hammer* a couple of days after I had interviewed him – 'And here's another thing you failed to understand!' – not really."

When did you realise the band were actually getting successful?
"When the songs from *Appetite...* became fixtures in the nightclubs I frequented. And when I saw them headline Hammersmith Odeon three months after the album came out. They were supported by Faster Pussycat and The Quireboys. I came away thinking that GN'R were the least impressive of those three bands."

What do you think about the album today?
"It's become part of the rock'n'roll wallpaper, I've had no alternative but to grow to like it. At the time I felt it my duty to overlook the propaganda and approach it like just another record. It's important to recall that nobody foresaw the record's success. Yes, I got it wrong, badly wrong, but hindsight can be very overwhelming. This was 33 years ago. GN'R have said they would have been overjoyed at selling 200,000 copies. Back in '87, had you told Axl and Slash that it would end up in 30 million homes worldwide they'd have laughed or called you insane."

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Appetite For Destruction*** **(1987)**

21 LAMB OF GOD

Virginia's pure American metallers

One of the finest bands of our time, who held their heads up high even during the toughest of circumstances. Throughout his unexpected ordeal in a Czech prison and his trial for manslaughter of a fan – for which he was acquitted – frontman Randy Blythe showed great strength, maintaining dignity in the face of hardship, squaring up to his moral duties and demonstrating his humility in the face of tragedy. Now they're back to doing what they do best – writing their self-proclaimed Pure American Metal songs and playing show after show on the road. Their new album, simply titled *Lamb Of God*, cuts to the essence of what they're about. The grooves are there, the hardcore ethos is there, and the persistence is there, as they take aim at injustice and the American dream the best way they know how. We're lucky to have them. Check out our interview with Randy on page 36 and our album review on page 88.
ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Sacrament*** **(2006)**

20 DIO

The greatest voice in all of metal

The diminutive figure with the massive voice and warm personality. Ten years on, we're still reeling from losing such a talent, but luckily Ronnie James Dio left enough songs to keep us entertained for a good long while. From his early days in Elf, to his stint in Rainbow, to his period with Black Sabbath and his time as a solo artist, he always approached music with imagination and passion, spinning fantasy tales that were often grounded in the reality of what it means to be human. Of course, many of them are just stone-cold bangers: *Rainbow In The Dark, Holy Diver* and *The Last In Line* to name but a few. And with his wife, Wendy Dio, managing his estate, we have even more to forward to; his biography's being completed with the help of journalist Mick Wall, there's a documentary in the works, and even a few unreleased songs. His voice will echo through the ages. Turn to page 70 for more.
ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Holy Diver*** **(1983)**

GUNS N' ROSES: GETTY. LAMB OF GOD: PRESS. DIO: PRESS.

19 DREAM THEATER

Our progressive metal overlords

The band with the most expansive minds in metal. Whether exploring past life regression therapy or immersing themselves in a world where music is made by machines, Canadian free-thinkers Dream Theater have never been afraid to take a concept and stretch it out to its conclusion. Nor of executing those concepts with the maximum level of precision and technical ability, their widdly solos and drawn-out diversions musical manna from heaven for those who love a bit of heavy prog indulgence. The departure of drummer/mastermind Mike Portnoy in 2010 was a significant bump in their career, but they managed to stay on course, even attracting their first Grammy nomination for the following year's appropriately named *A Dramatic Turn Of Events*. While 2019's *Distance Over Time* was their most conventional record in years, we wouldn't count out a return to proggier excursions just yet.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Images And Words*** **(1992)**

17 DEATH

Setting new standards of extremity

Death were always ahead of the game. The brainchild of Florida's Chuck Schuldiner, their visceral vocals, sinister riffs and urgent drumming made for an intense maelstrom, taking metal to a whole new blood-spattered level of extremity and giving rise to a genre: death metal. OK, Possessed had released their demo *Death Metal* in 1983, but disbanded after two albums, whereas Chuck followed through for seven. There was something undeniably exciting about what he was doing. His propensity to follow his own, singular vision led to fallouts with bandmembers, but also allowed him to push into new directions. For 1991's *Human*, he teamed up with Cynic's Sean Reinert and Paul Masvidal to produce a cutting-edge example of technical death metal, and left horror-movie gore behind for more introspective lyrics. Though Chuck tragically passed away from brain stem cancer aged 34, his music has had an enduring ripple effect.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Scream Bloody Gore*** **(1987)**

PRESS.

18 SYSTEM OF A DOWN

Why'd you leave the keys upon the table?

System Of A Down burned so brightly at the beginning of the millennium, it was a shame when they faded away. Yet their absence has only seemed to fuel a rise in popularity, leading to sell-out reunion shows, though no sign of new music yet.

It's difficult to pinpoint where it all went wrong, though we know the Armenian-American foursome have long had their tensions. Back in 2005, when *Hammer* scribe Jason Arnopp interviewed them backstage at Oakland's Coliseum Stadium before the release of last album *Hypnotize*, they freely conceded that arguments had rocked the boat. "Erm… there's been some military moments," frontman Serj Tankian beamed. "A few commando incursions, here and there."

"It's disturbing," admitted guitarist Daron Malakian. "There are moments of tension and people getting on each other's nerves. But things that might have broken up other bands haven't broken us, because of that closeness."

"There's been times," added bassist Shavo Odadjian, "when I've directed a video and they haven't liked it. One bandmember will say they love it, and then another says it's shit, straight to my face! But I appreciate the honesty. And we've used it anyway!"

With their political proclamations, System Of A Down are the most socially conscious band after Rage Against The Machine, but their lyrical absurdity has always given them an added layer of levity. When you find yourself bouncing around the room to a song before realising it's about bombings (*BYOB*, anyone…), it's a strange thing indeed. When we put it to them that *Hypnotize*'s *Vicinity Of Obscenity* (*'Banana banana banana banana terracotta banana terracotta terracotta pie'*) was a song only they could have penned, Serj was thrilled. "I have a terrible sense of humour; it's more British than American. I like things that don't make sense and bizarre connections: putting two different things that don't have a previous relationship next to each other. If you can't laugh at yourself and everything that you do in your life, you're missing the whole point. No matter how serious the topic."

"Songs like that are a way to even it all out," offered Daron. "A song like *Lonely Day* is just about a sad day I had alone at home, whereas something like *Vicinity Of Obscenity* is just, like, 'I don't give a fuck.' But don't we all have days when we watch TV and get really concerned about what's happening in the world, but also days where you're just drunk off your ass? For System Of A Down to be real, it has to be made up of the same things that make up a person."

System Of A Down might be made up of four complex people with various amounts of fucks to give, but here's hoping they can set aside their differences and make bizarro studio magic again someday. With their Download headline set axed due to the coronavirus, we're crossing our fingers for a big, rescheduled blowout in 2021.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Toxicity*** **(2001)**

SYSTEM OF A DOWN'S APPEARANCE AT DOWNLOAD HAS BEEN CANCELLED. FOR UPDATES ON DOWNLOAD 2021, SEE HTTPS://DOWNLOADFESTIVAL.CO.UK

16 MOTÖRHEAD

That's the way we liked it, baby

With Lemmy's death still raw in our minds, we're acutely aware of how brilliant his band were. Whether he was drinking Jack'n'Coke, playing the slot machines or enjoying female company, he was always busy living life exactly how he wanted, and so it was with his band. They were Motörhead, and they played rock'n'roll. Driven by speed in both senses of the word, the classic line-up of Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister, guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke and drummer Phil 'Philthy' Taylor released the untouchable *Overkill*, *Bomber* (both 1979) and *Ace Of Spades* (1980), changing heavy music forever in just two years. Though Eddie Clark left in 1982, the band carried on practising what they preached, and the *second* classic line-up of Lemmy, Phil Campbell and Mikkey Dee got into a groove that lasted from the mid-90s until the end. We can't believe it's been five years already, but we're still blasting them hard.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Ace Of Spades*** **(1980)**

15 RAMMSTEIN

Metal's twisted fire-starters

When Rammstein released their self-titled album last year it proved that, despite a decade-long delay, they had more fire in them than ever. The epic video for *Deutschland*, in which they exploded their country's sociopolitical past in mini-movie form, showed these citizens of the former East Germany were still unafraid of causing controversy with their art, while their new stage show revealed old familiar spectacles such as the penis cannon alongside more subtle, insidious tricks like the noxious, black smoke that filled those enormous stadiums. The fact they have this much ammunition to throw at the music scene more than two decades in is a testament to their artistry, and the cerebral impulses that underpin their shocking lyrics and stunts. After all, Till Lindemann, their towering, fearless leader, is also a published poet. It speaks volumes that their stentorian music draws heavily on their homeland's geographical roots and language, yet transcends borders.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Rammstein*** **(2019)**

14 BURGERKILL

Indonesia's biggest metal band

Winners of the Metal As Fuck award at the 2013 Golden Gods, Burgerkill continue to slay, as evidenced by their impassioned fans voting them all the way into our Top 15. Formed 25 years ago in the religiously conservative suburb of Ujung Berung in Bandung, they've grown up with the area's metal community and established a strong fanbase. But their journey hasn't been without obstacles; they've had gigs cancelled by radical Islamists and faced down corrupt authorities, and their original frontman, Ivan Scumbag, sadly passed away in 2006. Rising up through it all, they've managed to tour the world, including an immense show at 2015's Bloodstock , featuring a guest spot from none other than *Hammer* scribe/screamer Dom Lawson (who also appears on latest album *Adamantine*). Last year he flew over to hang with the band in Indonesia, where they celebrated the opening of a museum exhibition all about the history of the country's metal scene. And it's not over yet. Not by a long shot.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Adamantine*** **(2018)**

13 MEGADETH

The Big 4's snarling underdogs

We're stoked Dave Mustaine's been given the all-clear from cancer, and Megadeth are back at work on their *16th* record. When he was kicked out of Metallica in the 80s, few would have guessed he'd be leading a world-beating band in 2020. At first driven not just by making music but by revenge and, as the film *Metallica: Some Kind Of Monster* showed, deeply affected by that period of rejection, he gradually found peace in his band and Christianity. As one of the originators of thrash (and, infamously, the composer of the riff for *The Four Horsemen*), MegaDave was able to take the template he helped create and twist it, churning out snarling, chugging classics. With 14 songs written, a folder of another six, and working titles including the likes of *Rattlehead, Part Two* and *The Dogs Of Chernobyl*, we're stoked to see what Dave and co. unleash next.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Rust In Peace*** **(1990)**

PRESS. RAMMSTEIN: PRESS/JENS KOCH.

12 OPETH

Mikael Åkerfeldt and his merry men are still loved, despite turning their attention to prog

With frontman and band leader Mikael Åkerfeldt marching his merry men ever further down the prog rock rabbit hole over the last 10 years, it's easy to forget just what a monumentally important impact Opeth had on the metal scene in the 90s and 00s. Sweden was hardly starved of great death metal bands in that time, but few were treating the genre with such expansive and forward-thinking zeal as the Stockholm collective. 2001's *Blackwater Park* is widely and rightly regarded as a high-water mark for the band, who brought in Porcupine Tree genius Steven Wilson as producer to tease out some of the more progressive tendencies of their ever-evolving sound. It would set the Swedes on a path from which they'd never look back. That their heavier material is still rapturously received at Opeth shows to this day shows you how dearly metalheads still hold this band to their hearts.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Blackwater Park* (2001)**

11 TOOL

Metal's most enigmatic band are more relevant than ever today

Would Tool have ranked so highly on this list if they hadn't made such an emphatic and triumphant return last year? Quite possibly not, though you know that even in the 13 long years it took them to finally release *Fear Inoculum*, they would have never strayed too far from the minds of their most ardent fans (which covers pretty much *all* Tool fans, to be fair). Still, it can't have hurt their standing in the annals of metal greatness too much that *Fear Inoculum* was greeted as an absolute knockout, topping the *Metal Hammer* 2019 critics polls by a country mile and bagging the band another Grammy along the way. For all intents and purposes, Tool seem set on making sure we don't have to wait so long for album six, though as always, with Tool, there is only one rule: that there be no rules at all.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Lateralus* (2001)**

OPETH: PRESS. TOOL: PRESS/TRAVIS SHINN

10 BABYMETAL

The Fox God's devoted followers have carried them into the Top 10!

Yes, it's true: Babymetal's fans rallied in style and propelled Su-Metal and Moametal into being listed as one of the Top 10 greatest metal bands *ever*. It's testament to the incredible passion and devotion that Babymetal are able to inspire, and besides, theirs is a story that continues to astound and bemuse the metal scene in equal measure. In fact, they seem just as surprised about this result as many of us were…

How does it feel to be voted into the Top 10 metal bands of all time?

Su-Metal: "I honestly can't believe it… especially 'of all time!' It's truly an honour to hear that people regard Babymetal in that way and it gives me more strength to do what I love. Thank you so much for the love and support!"

Why do you think the Babymetal fanbase is so passionate?

Moametal: "I myself would like to know the reason why we have an amazing fanbase! Could you be so kind to survey each one of our fans? Ha ha ha! And if you do, please make sure to share the results with me. One of the biggest reasons why we've been able to continue Babymetal is because of the pouring love and support from our fans. All our fans, people who love Babymetal, and our staff make up what we call Team Babymetal. Words cannot express the appreciation we have to all of those who continue to support us. We will continue to do our best!"

Do you feel like pioneers in terms of bringing Japanese metal music and culture to a bigger audience?

Su-Metal: "I hope so! While we are performing, it's so fun seeing small children and fans singing along to our Japanese lyrics. We are so lucky to have such a wide fanbase and have the opportunity to tour internationally. It's also gratifying to hear from so many people that Babymetal helped widen the range of music they choose to listen to."

Ten years ago, did you envisage being in the position you are in today?

Moametal: "I am currently 20 years old. It's incredible to think that I have spent half of my life as part of Babymetal. When I first started, I would have never imagined that I would be spending half of my life as Moametal, and never would I have thought that I would have the opportunity to meet so many people worldwide and be supported by so many people. It's just so mind-boggling to think of what we have accomplished so far over these past 10 years and I feel absolutely lucky to have had such an experience. I'm glad that I've continued to do my best because if I hadn't, I couldn't have met so many people, travelled to different countries, or had the opportunity to try such a wide variety of food from all over the world! If I were to have the chance to speak to myself 10 years ago, I would tell myself, 'No matter how difficult it may seem right now, don't give up and keep going for the next 10 years. Not only is it incredibly special that I am a part of this for 10 years, but also to think that our fans [would] continually support us for a decade is absolutely remarkable – so appreciate and enjoy this experience!'"

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: *Metal Resistance* (2016)

***METAL GALAXY* IS OUT NOW VIA EARMUSIC**

BABYMETAL: PRESS

9 JUDAS PRIEST

The most metal band in metal. Simple as that

Any Greatest Metal list is totally meaningless without Judas Priest in its Top 10 as an absolute minimum – so we're relieved you lot didn't let us down on this one. The band that embody heavy metal more than any other have been on their best form in decades as of late, putting out a career-best-rivalling album in 2018 with *Firepower* and turning that album cycle into an honorary victory lap to celebrate 50 years on metal's frontlines. In a world where we are growing worryingly used to saying goodbye to legendary metal bands, let's be grateful that Priest have as much fire in their bellies as ever, with a new album in the works and plenty more touring to be done yet. It helps that Rob Halford has become one of the single greatest things on Instagram, of course. Seriously, if you're not following the man, you're really missing out.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***British Steel*** **(1980)**

8 GOJIRA

France's greatest export continue to make waves

Perhaps something of an underdog entry here, but Gojira absolutely deserve the adulation they have earned over the past two decades. If their explosively heavy, instantly recognisable music wasn't enough, the fact that there is such warmth and heart within their songs is what carries them so far above many of their peers. While their mission to save the planet has won them the hearts and minds of metal's more socially conscious quarters, it was the personal touches underpinning 2016's *Magma* that established them as a true band of the people. Written in the aftermath of the Duplantier brothers losing their mother, it was an emotional and enthralling climax to an already incredible story to that point. And yet, unbelievably, you still sense the best is yet to come. With a new album now due sooner rather than later, we can't wait to hear where their journey takes them next.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Magma*** **(2016)**

7 SLAYER

Gone but absolutely never forgotten

Let's be honest; it fucking sucks to have to be writing about Slayer in the past tense. The thrash metal titans finally called it quits for good at the end of last year after a farewell tour that took them around the world multiple times over. We weren't complaining; Slayer left us in fine form, putting together some of their fiercest and fieriest live shows ever, reminding us all why they were such a dominating force for heavy music over their 40-year career. And what a storied career it was; from scaring the shit out of the underground with their disgustingly fast thrash attack to panicking the mainstream with their controversial lyrics and live shows, they did it all. It was also a career touched with turbulence and tragedy, with the abrupt dismissal of Dave Lombardo and shocking death of Jeff Hanneman leaving some unfortunate asterisks on their later years.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Reign In Blood*** **(1986)**

JUDAS PRIEST: PRESS. GOJIRA: PRESS/TRAVIS SHINN. SLAYER: PRESS.

6 PANTERA

From explosion to implosion

It just had to end in tears. After 20 years of hellraising, Pantera finally imploded in 2003, the acrimony and chaos that had ripped its way into the band finally sealing its destruction. Phil Anselmo would never get to make amends with the Abbott brothers; Dimebag would be infamously killed onstage by a crazed fan in 2004, while Vinnie Paul would pass away suddenly from heart complications 14 years later. It was a sad ending to a story that had completely redefined heavy metal in the 90s and created some of the finest albums ever made in the process – a legacy done serious damage by Phil's racist white power outburst in 2016. That they've ranked so highly in this list despite all that shows just how vital Pantera have been to metal's evolution – perhaps that explains why so many fans are also still willing to give Phil (yet) another chance.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***A Vulgar Display Of Power*** **(1992)**

5 SLIPKNOT

They are not your kind

Only metal could give us a success story like Slipknot. Nine outcasts from Des Moines meet up in the 90s, dress up in boiler suits and masks and go about creating the most vicious, violent racket possible. Fast forward just over 20 years, and Slipknot isn't just a franchise – it's a dynasty. Slipknot festivals. Slipknot museums. Slipknot whiskey. Slipknot Pop! Vinyls?! Sure. Whatever you want. That they're the biggest metal band since Iron Maiden shows that nothing is too heavy or too out-there to be successful if you put your everything into it, and few can deny that Slipknot have spent the last two decades doing exactly that. Rarely has the term 'blood, sweat and tears' been so terrifyingly apt – though, in all fairness, perhaps 'blood, sweat, tears and vomit' would be more appropriate. Last year's *We Are Not Your Kind* showed that The Nine really are as good as ever.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Iowa*** **(2001)**

4 AC/DC

The Highway To Hell isn't getting any shorter

Some might argue that AC/DC don't belong on a list like this. We argue that you're all a bunch of big smellies and should go and stick on *The Razors Edge*'s title track and zip it. The band behind the biggest-selling rock album of all time (*Back In Back* is currently chilling on around 50 million sales worldwide), AC/DC have certainly had to weather their share of storms over the years. As well as famously bouncing back from the death of beloved frontman Bon Scott with that aforementioned, record-smashing 1980 classic, they more recently had to survive the retirement of founding member Malcolm Young in 2014 (he sadly passed away three years later) and the apparent departure of singer Brian Johnson (in 2016, replaced on tour by Axl Rose). While Axl did a bang-up job, fans still clamoured for Brian's return – and rumours persist we may well get that wish…

ESSENTIAL ALBUM:
Back In Black **(1980)**

PANTERA: PRESS. SLIPKNOT: PRESS/ALEXANDRIA CRAHAN CONWAY. AC/DC: GUIDO KARP/GKP.LA

3 BLACK SABBATH

The Godfathers. End of.

Few bands get to change the world once, let alone twice. Lurching out of Birmingham at the tail-end of the 60s, Black Sabbath were working-class warriors who turned the bleakness of their surroundings into their greatest weapon. The sound they created – a dark, alchemical stew of megalithic riffs and existential hopelessness – was metal's Big Bang, its elemental particles instantly passing into everything that followed.

Between 1970 and 1975 Sabbath released a run of six game-changing albums that remains unmatched in metal to this day. It went wrong soon after – the pressure of fame was just too much for the four young men to handle. And that's where it should have ended, at the close of a decade they had done so much to shape. But Ozzy's replacement Ronnie James Dio transformed them into something even grander and more majestic, placing them once more in the vanguard of history.

The entity that is Black Sabbath may be no more – the band officially bowed out in March 2017 after their final, 81-date tour and an incredible 49 years – but their legacy remains, as towering and immoveable as a mountain.

ESSENTIAL ALBUM: ***Master Of Reality*** **(1971)**

2 IRON MAIDEN

The British icons who ushered in metal's Golden Age

What's *your* favourite Iron Maiden era? The imperious 80s, when such monumental albums as *The Number Of The Beast* and *Powerslave* transformed these East London street rats into a global metal powerhouse? Or their remarkable post-millennial second act, when they bounced back from the 90s doldrums to become even more successful than they were before?

Few bands have had such huge yet distinct commercial and artistic peaks as Maiden. That's partly testament to their mettle – lesser bands would have folded when the going got tough. But it's more to do with the sheer quality of their music: they took the power and grit of their 70s forebears and blew it up to an enormous scale, granting metal permission to be epic in a way that it had never been before.

There's always been something swashbuckling about Maiden – not just the tales of derring-do that populate their albums, but their stubborn determination to do whatever the hell the want, however the hell they want. Trends come and go, the music industry rises and falls, but Maiden endure, eternally victorious.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING:
Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son **(1988)**

BLACK SABBATH: GETTY. IRON MAIDEN: PRESS/JOHN McMURTRIE. WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY.

1 METALLICA

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Obey your masters

It had to be Metallica. The icons who rose from scrappy Bay Area thrashers to stadium-conquering superstars, with the power to unite fans across metal's entire spectrum. They are a household name, and a byword for metal itself: Metallica gives you heavy. They've brought us classic records such as *Master Of Puppets* and *The Black Album*, and survived the tragic loss of bassist Cliff Burton. Missteps like the avant-garde *Lulu* and concert-film *Through The Never* are forgiven – we're just glad Metallica are here. When James Hetfield recently went back into rehab, the world was behind him.

The modern incarnation of Metallica began with the events depicted in 2004 documentary *Metallica: Some Kind Of Monster*, where they embarked on therapy to repair broken inter-band relationships and James decamped for a spell in rehab. That film also revealed the incredible moment they asked an awestruck Rob Trujillo to become their new bassist. The resulting *St. Anger* might have drawn criticism for its snare sound, but it also ushered in a period of stability and harmony. In 2003, *Hammer* man Chris Ingham found James at peace with his demons.

Were you surprised at how pissed-off-sounding the record ended up becoming?

James: "I have to say that the more we feel as brothers again these days then, yeah, the more this angry stuff seeps out in the form of this Metallica vs the world thing, if you like. On [1983's] *Kill 'Em All* there's no doubt we had it – we were friends and brothers in arms out there battling against 80s big hair bands – it feels really good to be strong again."

***St. Anger* is as an empowering a title as it can get – there's a whole load of piss 'n' vinegar left in Metallica still simmering away, isn't there?**

"My thing is that I get annoyed that people won't let you be angry. Anger has a bad rap. It has these connotations that something bad is gonna happen or something is gonna break, but for me anger is a good way of getting your point across a lot of times – in a healthy way without degrading or injuring another person. It's definitely an energy we all feed off.

"Growing up in my household there was no anger allowed but I sure as hell felt it, like everyone else did. I would feel it all the time and I'd swallow it and swallow it and bottle it all up and pretty soon instead of my anger being directed it kinda came out sideways, seeping out unexpectedly."

Where does the title 'St. Anger' come from?

"Someone gave me a St. Christopher way back in the *Ride The Lightning* days and it took me years to discover that he was the patron saint for the protection of travellers. When I came out of rehab it hit home to me that we didn't have a patron saint of anger. And if there wasn't one then, dammit, Metallica were gonna create one!

"So if you're looking for the genesis of the 'St. Anger' idea then I guess it lies with me going through rehab and doing some serious soul searching. I had various religions being thrown at me in there – in rehab there were a lot of recovering Catholics! Ha ha! The iconic dogma attached to it all must've impacted upon me."

Most people reading this won't have ever been anywhere near a rehab centre. Can you explain what new perspectives your time spent in there gave you?

"I've said recently that rehab was college for my head, but I meant to say that it was college for my soul. I had no idea how to get to a point of belonging that I perceived everyone else had. I know it sounds weird, here's James from Metallica – he's a guy who has everything – but still, it never clicked in my mind what it was that I was working toward. What was my purpose? What was my role in life? Nothing made sense to me. Stripping all that away then you start to really understand that, hey I'm in here in rehab for me, not my family, not my band, but for me and my mental health and it's important. Before that I had a fear that I might be insane with all those fears and questions floating around, but of course, if you're sane enough to rationalise that you might be insane then usually you're not."

"REHAB IS COLLEGE FOR MY SOUL... I'M IN HERE FOR ME"
JAMES HETFIELD

Lars has given the impression that while you were away he very much feared for the future of Metallica. Did you ever feel that way or were you always sure that Metallica would somehow endure?

"Metallica have been through a lot of problems – through Cliff dying, me breaking my arm twice, me getting all burnt up after I stepped on the pyro [in '92] and each time I knew that Metallica would go on. This time, I had to get to the mindset of, 'Hey, can I just imagine that I'm not in Metallica right now and I'm just taking care of myself?' I knew that if I couldn't get over that and if I couldn't understand the concept of not being able to imagine not being in Metallica – and remember I've worn that badge since I was 18 – then I couldn't come back and be healthy within Metallica. It was about dealing with that realisation that I'd always been relying on the band to reassure me and provide me with my personality. I had to separate from family and band and all that entails to realise that if Metallica didn't continue then I'd still live and the world wouldn't die. But, no shit, it was a truly very scary time for me.

"I knew that all the other guys were going through a very rough time dealing with it. Lars always wants to feel control over everything, like I do, so it was particularly rough on him.

"The months and months of the guys going round in circles waiting for me when I didn't even know whether I was gonna be back must've been very hard. In the end they came to the same conclusions as me – just let it go, stop trying to control a situation that you can't and just see where it takes you. I think it was healthy for each one of us to have been through that."

ESSENTIAL ALBUM:
Master Of Puppets (1986)

STAY TUNED TO WWW.METALHAMMER.COM FOR METALLICA UPDATES

PRESS/ROSS HALFIN

RONNIE JAMES DIO

Horns up! Ronnie James Dio in February 1988

"Ronnie had that magic touch"

It's been 10 years since we lost Ronnie James Dio, but his memory lives on through his incredible music. We spoke to wife Wendy Dio about the power of the man behind the voice

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

GETTY

RONNIE JAMES DIO

"Ronnie touched so many people, not only with his talent but also as a human being. He cared about people more than anything. I think they broke the mould when they made him." (Wendy Dio)

On May 16, 2010, metal lost its greatest-ever voice. And let us be clear here: there is absolutely no doubt that Ronnie James Dio was (and still is) one of heavy metal's most important figures of all.

The diminutive New Yorker with the gigantic voice was born in 1942 and began his musical career in the late 50s as vocalist and bassist with teen beat group The Vegas Kings. A decade later, Ronnie was a member of boogie rockers Elf, who became a regular support act for rock giants Deep Purple.

After their third album, Elf were effectively hijacked by Deep Purple's Ritchie Blackmore, who used them as the first line-up of his new band Rainbow, with Ronnie front and centre as lead vocalist. The rest, as you know, is history: Rainbow would make a vast contribution to the evolution of heavy music, not least with 1976's ageless *Rainbow Rising* album, before Ronnie departed to replace Ozzy Osbourne in Black Sabbath. After two wildly successful albums, he embarked on his own career under the Dio name, scoring yet another huge success with 1983's immortal *Holy Diver*. From then on, Ronnie James Dio was, quite simply a living legend. Like most big names in metal, he experienced a significant commercial downturn in the 90s, but the 21st century proved to be much more respectful of the great man's contribution, aided by a string of excellent Dio albums and a widely praised return to the Black Sabbath fold for 2009's extraordinary *The Devil You Know* (released under the name Heaven & Hell).

By the time of his passing he was enjoying both a critical renaissance and a huge upsurge in popularity, with a heroic cameo in Tenacious D's *The Pick Of Destiny* (2006) introducing that unmistakable voice to a whole new generation of potential fans along the way. Speaking to *Hammer* a decade after his death, Ronnie's wife Wendy Dio agrees that he was in a great place, both personally and professionally, when a cruel twist of fate took him from us.

"He'd finished doing stuff with the Sabbath guys. It was great that he got the opportunity before he passed away. Everybody loved each other and everybody was playing unbelievably well. They were kicking each other's arses. He used to say, 'Oh god, I've got to keep up with all of them!' It was so nice that Geezer and Ronnie were back as best friends, which they were."

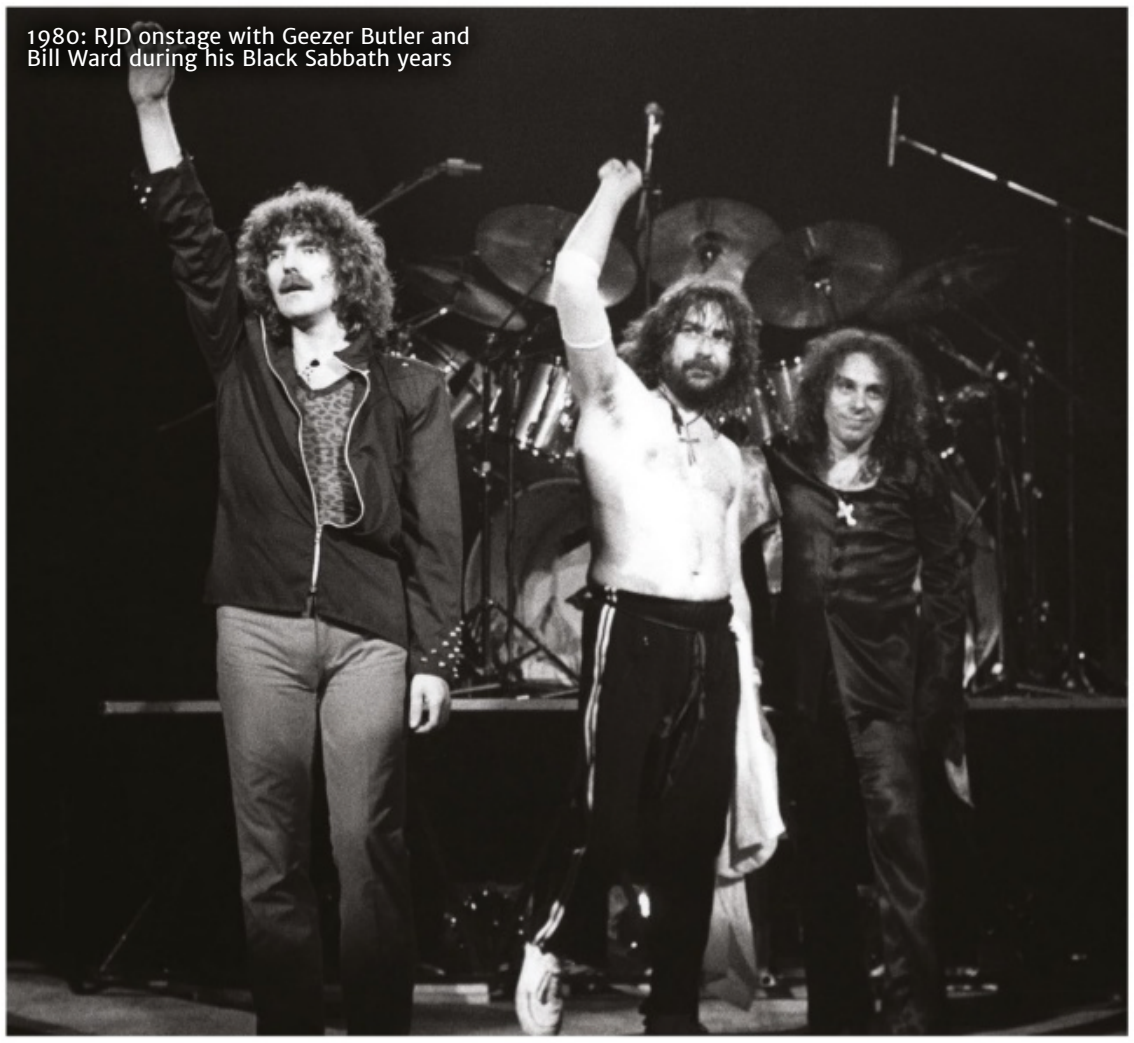
Elf in London, circa 1973. Left to right: Steve Edwards, Craig Gruber, Gary Driscoll, Ronnie Dio, Mickey Lee Soule

As showcased on *The Devil You Know* (and pretty much everything he released this side of 2000), Ronnie's voice never lost a shred of its power or authority over his more than 50-year musical career. If anything, he was sounding better than ever in those final years, as Wendy Dio confirms.

"I think that Ronnie's voice was *always* good. He knew how to control his voice. It was his instrument and he knew exactly how to play it. The one thing about Ronnie getting ill and then passing away was that he never lost his voice. I think that's one thing he couldn't have dealt with. I don't think he could've dealt with getting old and not being able to sing. So it was a blessing, that he could come back on top with the Sabbath guys before he passed, you know?"

In the 10 years since Ronnie died, Wendy Dio has been constantly active, both regarding the maintenance and promotion of her late partner's legacy, but also as a dedicated and passionate fundraiser for research into the early detection of certain cancers, including the stomach cancer that took Ronnie, via the Ronnie James Dio Stand Up And Shout Cancer Fund.

"That's why I do the fund, because we try to make people realise that early detection saves lives," Wendy states. "We're working with doctors at UCLA who are working on a saliva test for colon cancer, pancreatic cancer and stomach cancer, and hopefully they'll come through with that. It would be



1980: RJD onstage with Geezer Butler and Bill Ward during his Black Sabbath years

Rainbow in June 1977 (clockwise from top left): Ronnie James Dio, Ritchie Blackmore, Cozy Powell, Bob Daisley, David Stone (centre)

very early testing, so then you could operate and get rid of it. If I'd known then what I know *now*, maybe we could've saved Ronnie."

Given that he was enjoying a new wave of acclaim and adoration at the time of his death, it's impossible not to wonder what might have been if Ronnie James Dio had been able to conquer his illness. It is reported that he was working with guitarist Doug Aldrich on a sequel to 2000's conceptual epic *Magica* – one song from those sessions, *Electra*, appeared on 2012's *The Very Beast Of Dio Vol.2* compilation. Beyond that, little is known about what lurks in the Dio archives, but Wendy is beginning to make plans to share some unheard gems with the world.

"Doug just did an interview for the [forthcoming Dio] documentary and he had a song that Ronnie was working on, a *Magica* song, and he played some of it to me," she says. "I don't want to use it for the documentary, because I'd rather use it for something we can bring out and have it finished properly. But it was great, because I didn't know about it. Then there were another couple of songs that we found on Ronnie's computer too, so hopefully we'll have three more *Magica* songs. That was his dream, to finish that. It was supposed to be a trilogy of albums, and he wanted to do a rock opera with it, like [The Who's] *Tommy*. That was his dream, but unfortunately it didn't happen."

Unfinished work from his last years aside, it's hard to conceive that Ronnie didn't have a huge amount of unheard recordings stashed away from all those decades of service on the metal frontline. Wendy Dio admits that she has only recently felt emotionally robust enough to go through Ronnie's studio vaults, but that the process has now begun and there seems to be plenty of treats in store for the faithful.

"We have a home studio here in the house and Ronnie would always go down there with his drum machine, and he'd write songs and make demos, so *all* those tapes are in the studio!" she says, sounding understandably delighted. "Sometime, when the time is right, I'll release those. People would be fascinated with hearing the original ideas and how things changed between the demo and the studio. We've found a *lot* of stuff in the vault. I couldn't really go in there before, but now it's been 10 years I can go in and I find things. I don't want to flood the market with stuff, but hopefully we have those three *Magica* songs and there's a lot of unreleased live stuff that's never been heard, too."

"HE NEVER LOST HIS VOICE"

WENDY DIO

As it turns out, Ronnie had also been working on his autobiography prior to his death – a project that Wendy is determined to see through to the end. Meanwhile, she is also working on an extensive documentary about Ronnie's life, tentatively due for release sometime next year. After a decade of relative quiet, Dio fans have a lot of cool stuff to look forward to in the near future.

"I'm finishing Ronnie's book with Mick Wall," Wendy explains. "I have been working with Mick very closely, because we want it all to be in Ronnie's words. He wrote up to almost the end of the Rainbow era, but then we found some odd scraps of things on his computer, so we're kinda putting that together and then there are all the interviews that he did during that lifetime, so we're using those too. I think the book is going to end in 1990. I'm also doing a documentary right now, on Ronnie's life, and we're going to interview *everybody* for that."

There can't be many richer or more eventful stories in heavy history than the life and times of Ronald James Padavona. From tentative teenage beginnings to his now-unassailable status as one of the most influential singers in rock history, Ronnie crammed an insane amount into his 67 years and, above

GETTY

all, proved that a sublime talent and fearless persistence were an unstoppable combination. Wendy first met him in 1974, at the Rainbow Bar & Grill in Hollywood, Los Angeles, and within weeks the pair were inseparable. Ronnie even wrote a song about his better half: *Rainbow Eyes*, from Rainbow's 1978 album *Long Live Rock 'n' Roll*. They spent the next 40 years as a formidable partnership, with Ronnie handling the music (and being generally godly) and Wendy overseeing the business side of things. It sounds very much like an equal enterprise, but Wendy still sounds ever-so-slightly in awe of the love of her life.

"You know, he was *incredibly* inspiring to me," she avows. "When he joined Sabbath, he had to jump into Ozzy's shoes and that was an *incredibly* hard thing to do. At first, people were booing him and giving him the finger, but then they realised, 'Wow, this guy is *good*!' He had a great voice, he loved what he was doing and he wasn't trying to be Ozzy. Then, when Ronnie left Sabbath and went out on his own with *Holy Diver*, we mortgaged our own house to make sure we could do something as big as he'd done with Sabbath. To be at the first show after *Holy Diver* and see everyone go berserk was overwhelming. He just had that magic touch. I don't think he knew how or why!"

The 10th anniversary of Ronnie James Dio's untimely passing seems like an excellent opportunity to dig deep into his catalogue and to check out some of his less celebrated records. Overseen by Wendy, the last four Dio albums – *Angry Machines*, *Magica*, *Killing The Dragon* and *Master Of The Moon* – have all just been given a sonic polish and have been re-released in lavish vinyl formats with eye-frazzling lenticular artwork. The slightly iffy *Angry Machines* aside, they are all are eminently worth a revisit. But as Wendy acknowledges with an affectionate chuckle, any tribute to Ronnie will inevitably focus on those three astonishing milestones: *Rainbow Rising*, *Heaven And Hell* and *Holy Diver*; heavy music's ultimate hat-trick.

"Yeah, just look at those three albums!" laughs Wendy. "Ronnie was as surprised as anyone that he did it three times, but you know what? The big shame is that he's never been put into the Hall Of Fame. It's insane, but what can you do? Who knows who's voting for that? Let's face it, Ronnie was an innovator in heavy metal music and he absolutely broke the mould. Ten years after his passing, he still has two-and-a-half million people on his Facebook! He cared deeply about the fans, so that means a lot after all this time."

Heaven & Hell in 2007 (left to right): Tony Iommi, Ronnie James Dio, Vinny Appice, Geezer Butler

Wendy Dio in 2012, at the Ronnie James Dio Stand Up And Shout Cancer Fund celebrity guitar auction preview

"WE MORTGAGED OUR OWN HOUSE FOR *HOLY DIVER*"

WENDY DIO

While the coronavirus pandemic has scuppered some of Wendy's fundraising plans for 2020, she is still determined to keep the ball rolling, with her annual Bowl For Ronnie event still set to take place in LA in the autumn. Meanwhile, work continues on Ronnie's book, the documentary and the meticulous analysis of all that unreleased material. These are exciting times for Wendy, and for Dio fans (which is everybody, isn't it?). But the finest singer in metal history will always be greatly missed. His music, of course, will live forever. Time to raise a glass to the greatest of all time.

"When Jack Black got the Grammy in 2015 for [Tenacious D's cover of] *Last In Line*, I thought, 'Oh, I wish Ronnie could've been here to see one of his songs win a Grammy…' That was so sad. It's things like that that get to you," concludes Wendy. "But I go to see him at the cemetery every two weeks, so he knows he's not forgotten. Every year, on the day of his passing, about 20 or 30 of his very close friends have a gathering at the grave site and then we all go to an Indian restaurant to have a good time and to celebrate his life. We all just want to make Ronnie proud!"

THE REISSUES OF *ANGRY MACHINES*, *MAGICA*, *KILLING THE DRAGON* AND *MASTER OF THE MOON*, FEATURING LIVE AND STUDIO BONUS TRACKS, ARE OUT NOW ON VINYL, CD AND DIGITALLY VIA BMG

DIO DEEP CUTS

Five unsung gems from Ronnie's colossal catalogue

BLACK SWAMPY WATER
(Trying To Burn The Sun, Elf, 1975)
Elf's sparky boogie rock was a long way from the epic heavy metal that would make Ronnie a star, but it still kicked enough arse to grab Ritchie Blackmore's attention. The opening cut from the New Yorkers' third album is a riot of clattering pianos and *that* voice.

GATES OF BABYLON
(Long Live Rock 'n' Roll, Rainbow, 1978)
Second only to *Stargazer* (from *Rainbow Rising*), this Rainbow cut showcased the creative peak of Ronnie's partnership with Ritchie Blackmore. Epic, ethereal, progressive and heavy as iron balls, *Gates Of Babylon* still sounds like music from another world.

ALL THE FOOLS SAILED AWAY
(Dream Evil, Dio, 1987)
Dio's first few albums were so full of great songs that picking just one is likely to make your brain hurt. Nonetheless, ignoring the obvious likes of *Holy Diver* and *Rainbow In The Dark*, this proggy ballad from the underrated *Dream Evil* is about as majestic as it gets.

THE END OF THE WORLD
(Master Of The Moon, 2004)
As dark and ominous as anything he'd written, this gem from the final Dio album demonstrates how powerful and evocative Ronnie's voice could be. When he sings '*Don't get emotional, but we're out of time...*' you may find you have something stuck in your eye.

FOLLOW THE TEARS
(The Devil You Know, Heaven & Hell, 2009)
Ronnie plainly had much more to give when he died in 2010, aged only 67. At least his last released music was among his finest ever. Reunited with Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Vinny Appice, he sang better than ever before on this absurdly heavy song from Heaven & Hell's one and only full-length.

Ronnie James Dio in his element

GETTY

At home with Ice T

Ice T doesn't do house parties. So, when the Body Count frontman and hip hop legend invited us over for a rare look around his New Jersey mega-pad, we could hardly resist. Fire up the hot tub…

WORDS: JON WIEDERHORN • PICTURES: JUSTIN BORUCKI

Walk into Ice T's house and you are immediately greeted by a breathtaking oil painting of his wife Coco, lying naked with her back arched, tendrils of red fabric strategically placed. Across the narrow entranceway, there's a portrait of the couple's late bulldog Spartacus, the animal that co-starred on their reality show, *Ice Loves Coco*, which ran for three seasons from June 2011 to January 2013.

A narrow staircase leads up to the first floor where Coco invites us in and offers us drinks. Dressed in a skin-tight beige top, camouflage pants and sporting pink-red hair, she's as much a celebrity as her husband. Standing next to Coco is the couple's adorable four-year-old daughter, Chanel. A minute later, Ice strides into the living room wearing a black baseball cap, a hoodie, sweatpants and untied white Nike high-top sneakers. After a few minutes of small talk with Coco, about the neighbourhood and the modern architecture of their house, Ice tactfully injects himself into the conversation. "This place works for me," he says. "It's kind of like a Miami home in the middle of New Jersey. "Everyone in Jersey has got Colonial houses and that reminds me of slavery. No way was I gonna live in a Colonial."

This ain't Beverly Hills or Greenwich Village, New York. This is suburban Edgewater, New Jersey, and for the past five years it has been the home turf of Ice-Mothafuckin'-T. Ice was attracted to Edgewater by the panoramic cityscapes, the variety of restaurants and, perhaps most of all, the 15-minute commute to Chelsea Piers, where *Law & Order: SVU*, is shot. For the past 20 years, Ice T has played Detective Odafin 'Fin' Tutuola on the hit series.

At 62, Ice still looks street-lethal – tall and muscular with a thin, dark moustache and a short, anchor-shaped beard unflecked by grey hairs. In conversation he's friendly and verbose, but even when he's smiling, his eyes reflect an underlying intensity. As he sits on a white leather couch decorated with pink and purple pillows, his two English bulldogs Maximus (eight-year-old son of Spartacus) and Alexus (the newest addition to the family) sit faithfully by his side. He's most excited to talk about the new Body Count album, *Carnivore*, which includes songs about inherent savagery, police brutality and income inequality. The colourful pillows and children's toys scattered across the room contrast with Ice's OG image.

Hanging (ahem) with Ice T

More like Royal T. Royalty... Royal T... forget it

"When people used to come over to my house, they would expect to see motherfuckers hanging off meat hooks 'cause they been listening to my music," Ice says. "I'm like, 'What you think I was robbing and stealing for back in the day?' The most brutal

"PEOPLE EXPECT MOTHERFUCKERS HANGING OFF MEAT HOOKS"

ICE T

criminals I've ever met are in search of peace. They want that house with a fence around it, man."

Body Count's frontman has come a long way since he was a teenager on the streets of Los Angeles. But Ice T isn't entirely a product of his environment. Born Tracy Lauren Marrow in Newark, New Jersey, Ice grew up in the nearby suburb Summit in a duplex house on a quiet street. When he was in the third grade (the third year of primary school), his mother died of a heart attack. He was raised by his father, who worked as a conveyor belt mechanic. Then, tragedy struck again. When Ice was 12, his dad died of coronary failure so Ice moved in with his father's sister, who lived in a safe part of Los Angeles. Although Ice befriended some of the Rollin 60's Neighborhood Crips street gang in high school, he didn't become a gangster until he graduated and moved into his own place.

"I was 17 and I was living on Kansas Avenue for $100 a month and it was the scariest place I'd been," he says. "I was getting $250 a month from Social Security because my parents had passed. So I would pay my rent, budget $100 a month for food and keep $50 in my pocket. That's when I got into crime because when you're broke, jacking one car stereo would double your income. You realise that and then you start to do other things."

Ice T specialised in robbing jewellery stores before he decided he wanted to be a rapper and didn't want to risk his

"So this is my Monday car, this is my Tuesday car, this is my Wednesday car..."

career by getting arrested. And he has come a long way since his 1983 debut rap single, *The Coldest Rap/Cold Wind Madness*. He released his first album, *Rhyme Pays*, in 1987 (one of eight rap records) and launched Body Count in 1990 with the controversial single *Cop Killer*. Ice lived in 11 houses or apartments before putting out his comeback metal record, 2014's *Manslaughter*. The next year, he and Coco moved to their luxury home in Edgewater. The cosy upscale community is adjacent to the Hudson River and is a mere nine miles from New York City, so real estate here is a commodity. That's why the couple bought the frame of a house and hired a construction team to build it up instead of outward. To travel from one floor to the next, they ride a glass elevator. "I thought it was overkill 'til I actually started living vertically," he says. "And then when you walk up to the fourth floor and you go, 'Oh shit, I left my sunglasses downstairs,' that's when you realise you need a fucking elevator."

Downstairs in the kitchen, Coco explains how they chose white cabinetry because it complements any other colour in the house. As she talks, Chanel uses her rhinestone-decorated iPad to take pictures of her parents and their visitors. Before their daughter was born, Ice and Coco often ate out. Now, they're usually too tired, so Coco has started cooking Ice's favourite foods, including tacos, lasagne and spaghetti. "She's a decent cook," Ice says. "I had to teach her to stick to the recipe, though, 'cause it'll say to use one spoon of sugar. She'll be like, 'Well, if one is good, a couple more will be even better.' I have to keep that shit in check."

When he's not hanging out with Coco and Chanel or playing videogames on his giant screen TV ("I like shooters because I can murder people without going to jail"), Ice sometimes works on voiceover parts using GarageBand on an upstairs computer. But he saves the bulk of his vocal work for band sessions since he opted not to have a home studio. Years ago, Ice relished his home studio, but these days he thinks of studio time the same way he views hitting the gym. "There's something about getting ready and going to the gym that makes you work out more when you're there than you would if it was in your house," Ice says. "At home, I get onto the bench and I fall asleep. I'm not really working out. Same with the studio. There's a ritual. I go and I commit."

Ice's First Annual Players Award, from his old gangster pals

Mind your step, man – you don't want to be a Cuddly Toy Killer

In case Ice forgets what he looks like

If you've earned it, flaunt it

Bling it! Pimp cup, pride of place

Fiver says he was actually watching *Tiger King* just before we arrived

The stairwells and hallways are decorated with a mélange of abstract art, music memorabilia (gold and platinum records, concert photos), images of the family (including the dogs) and tributes from fans. One of the highlights of the house is the lavish master bedroom, which features red wall-to-wall carpeting, another big-screen TV, a robotic-looking reclining chair and a king-sized bed with matching decorative pillows. Ice and Coco jokingly call the bed 'The Disney Wild Safari Ride' since they co-sleep with Chanel and are often joined by the dogs. "It's cute and funny because we're all romping around the bed," Ice says. "But at the same time, it's frustrating because we have to make special arrangements to have any kind of sex."

It isn't just the family chaos that challenges the couple's sex life. Ice works late and often travels. One thing that doesn't get in the way is his age. "I just turned 62 and I'm still knocking it out the park," he says with a smile. "I can still make a baby through a brick wall. Once you stop having sex, I don't know what the reason is to be alive. To me, it's the energy that drives life and inspires everything else."

The bedroom closet was originally designed to hold both Ice and Coco's clothes. Now, it's just Ice's and contains old stage wear, formal outfits, and tons of sneakers. However, it pales in comparison to the two guest bedrooms the couple combined into Coco's wardrobe, a whole wall of which is filled with colourful stilettos. "It's cool, 'cause now when we have guests, there's no room for them so they have to stay in a hotel," says Ice, adding that

"I CAN MAKE A BABY THROUGH A BRICK WALL!"
ICE T

Ice was once broke, but now he's well-heeled

Coco's clothing nook was part of a trade-off for his seven-car collection, which is housed in the garage on a two-level hydraulic lift designed for maximal storage.

Of course, the floor with the master bedroom wouldn't please the master if it didn't contain a giant Jacuzzi decorated with lights that change colour at random. "My buddies told me, 'If you didn't have a baby, that pool would get somebody pregnant,'" Ice says. "But now, with Chanel here, we fill it up and it's like a mini swimming pool, so even though it's too cold to use the outdoor pool, we can still hang out in the family tub."

To conclude the tour, Ice leads us back to the elevator where we ascend to the roof deck. There's a bite in the air, but it's just sunny enough to check out the waterside views of the George

One Ice-cool family

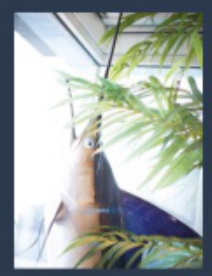
Washington Bridge and Midtown Manhattan. As we prepare to exit, Coco gives us tight hugs and Ice, who has been a damn good sport (normally he hates giving house tours) shakes our hands. Someone jokes that since it's still before dinner, Ice can break out the Courvoisier, invite some friends over, dim the lights and crank the tunes.

"Nahhh," he says, then smiles. "I grew up around so many people at all times, now I like privacy. When you guys leave, I probably won't have anybody over here for a couple of weeks. But I don't do social things. I don't drink, I don't smoke weed. So what the fuck are we going to do? Know what I'm saying? I don't have social engagements. I play video games." MH

CARNIVORE IS OUT NOW VIA CENTURY MEDIA. READ ICE T'S TRACK-BY-TRACK AT METALHAMMER.COM

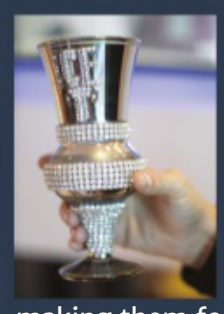
Crib sheet

What's the sickest stuff in Ice T's house?



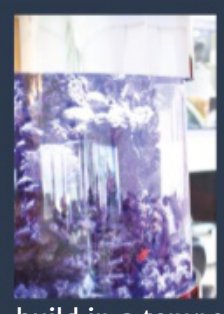
GIANT MARLIN
"We've got a replica of the fish Coco caught in Cabo. We went deep-sea fishing and she hooked up this 110" fish. I filmed her struggling with this marlin for two hours! My camera's memory card corrupted and I spent 48 hours of my vacation trying to recover the photo. It didn't happen. But for our TV show, *Ice Loves Coco*, we went to Florida and she caught two that day. It's all on camera."

SPORTS CARS
"I'm not fucking Jay Leno, but I've had as many as 20 cars at one time. Now I've got about seven sports cars. My latest is a Karma electric car. It has solar panels on the ceiling. That's a fucking spaceship. It's faster than anything. I call it the Time Machine, because it looks like it's from the future. But my favourite is the Porsche GT3. For the money, that's the best car."



PIMP CUP
"I got a real official Chicago Pimp Cup. This is what the players had. In Chicago, you put your champagne in there and all day you just walk around with this cup. It's part of the whole get-up. This is from the same lady that's been making them for many, many years in Chicago. She made this for me."

NAPOLEON ICE
"My painting was done by a very famous artist named Kehinde Wiley [in 2005], and he modelled it after a classic painting [Napoleon On His Imperial Throne by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1806]. It was done for [annual VH1 event] the Hip Hop Honors. They said, 'Pick out a historic figure that you identify with.' So I picked Napoleon 'cause I was from LA and I was out to take over the world."



AQUARIUM
"There's a structural beam in the middle of the house that we needed to keep the roof up. I said, 'What? I don't want a fucking beam there. We gotta build an aquarium.' These cats showed up and built this tank around it. We had to build in a temperature system, because if the water goes over 80° the coral suffocates, and if it goes below 80° the fish die, too. But those little corals, sea urchins and anemones are cool and they'll grow."

FIRST ANNUAL PLAYERS AWARD
"I got this award from all the people I used to rob jewellery stores with. They wrote on there, 'We want to go on record to say how proud we are of you for making the transition from hustler mac player pimp to a successful rapper, actor and entrepreneur. From the entire crew.' It's a big diamond on top because when we robbed someplace we were always trying to get that. That's better than an Oscar, because it's from my guys."

Being Nergal

Agitator. Provocateur. Enfant terrible. Adam Nergal Darski isn't afraid of rattling people's cages. But does he always get it right, and what's his endgame?

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY • PICTURES: GRZEGORZ GOŁĘBIOWSKI

NERGAL

When Adam Nergal Darski turned 39, he threw the party to end all parties. "It was huge," he says proudly. "People still talk about it now." By contrast, for his 40th birthday he turned off his phone and took off on a three-day romantic holiday in Rome with his girlfriend.

"Turning 40 was not a big deal," he says. "I'm not really attached to numbers. Honestly, we try to give meaning to this life. Is there any? I don't think so. You live and then you die."

It's a pessimistic view – or maybe just a realistic one. It could certainly explain why Nergal, now 42, has crammed a lot of things into his time on the planet. As the driving force behind Behemoth, he's become a figurehead for modern extreme metal. He's a businessman, a TV personality and a cancer survivor (he legally changed his middle name to Nergal after being given the all-clear following a battle with leukaemia in the early 10s).

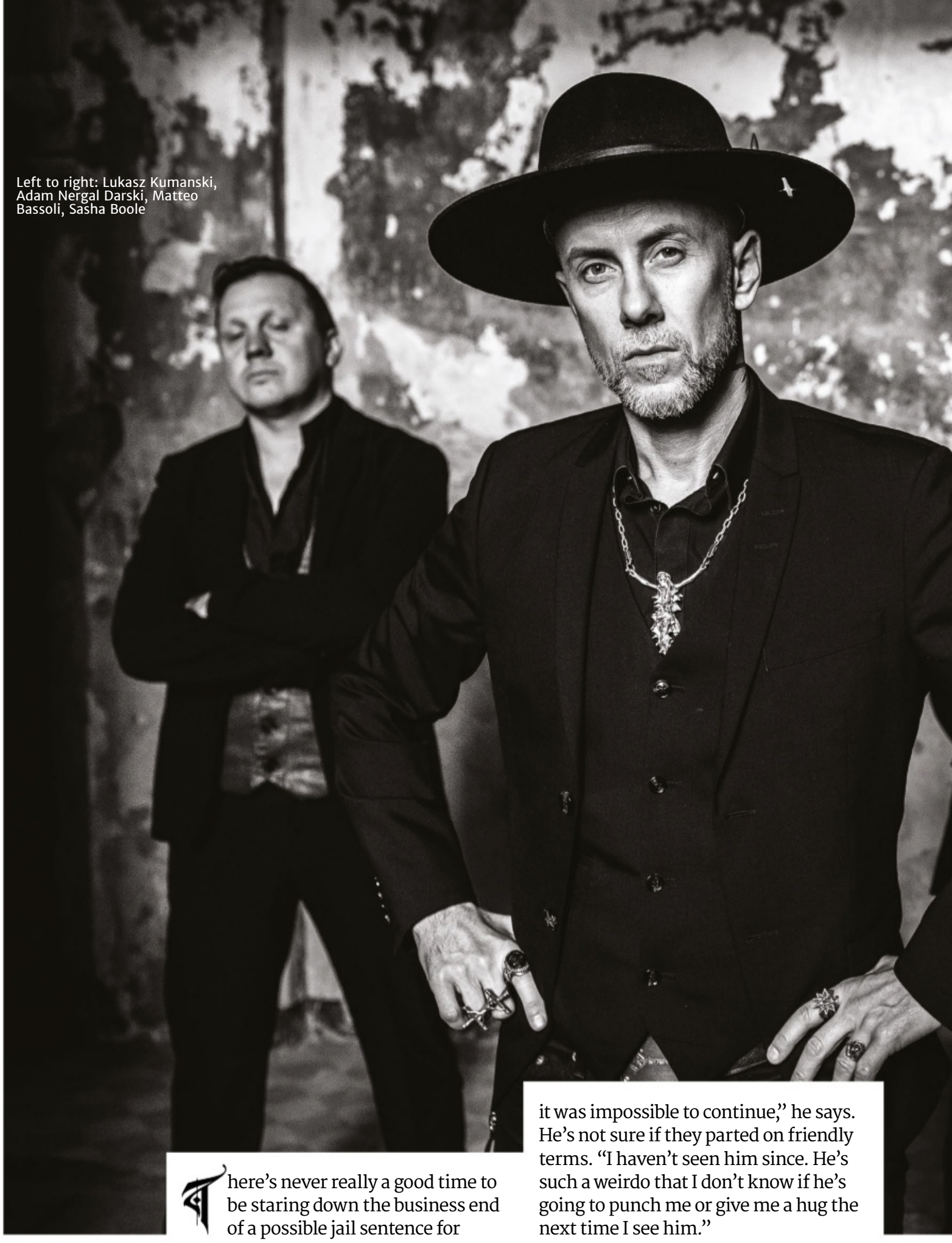
He's a figure of controversy, too. Nergal's beliefs and actions – individualistic in his eyes, sometimes problematic to others – have landed him in various degrees of trouble at different points in his career.

In 2010, he was charged under Poland's archaic blasphemy laws after calling the Catholic Church a "murderous cult" and tearing up a bible onstage during a Behemoth show three years earlier (charges were dropped, then resurrected, then dropped again). He's due in court a month after we speak on blasphemy charges yet again. This time it stems from an Instagram photo he posted of himself and Celtic Frost's Tom G Warrior with a dildo sculpture featuring an effigy of Jesus on it.

"It's not going to be easy," he says of the court case. "But I'm well-armoured. I have a very strong argument. I'm not giving up, man."

Poland's Catholic Church aren't the only ones the frontman has made enemies of in recent years. He has faced criticism from anti-fascist activists and adherents of political correctness for a litany of perceived crimes, from flaunting a 'Black Metal Against Antifa' t-shirt on Instagram to suggesting "I bet there's Adolf Hitler in each one of you" during a *Metal Hammer* interview.

The role of provocateur is one Nergal seems to relish, and it's a job he does well. But to what end? Is Adam Nergal Darski stirring the pot for a reason, or just for the hell of it?



Left to right: Lukasz Kumanski, Adam Nergal Darski, Matteo Bassoli, Sasha Boole

There's never really a good time to be staring down the business end of a possible jail sentence for blasphemy, but right now is particularly awkward. The case is due to start a week before the release of *New Man, New Songs, Same Shit, Vol. 1*, the second album from Nergal's gothic country-blues side project, Me And That Man.

"I THOUGHT I WAS SPECIAL. I WAS UNBEARABLE!"

NERGAL

The knowing title refers to the fact that MATM are now essentially Nergal. John Porter, the veteran British musician who was an equal partner on the band's debut album, *Songs Of Love And Death*, is nowhere to be seen, something Nergal puts down to John's erratic behaviour. "On a personal level, it was impossible to continue," he says. He's not sure if they parted on friendly terms. "I haven't seen him since. He's such a weirdo that I don't know if he's going to punch me or give me a hug the next time I see him."

Instead, the new album features an array of guest singers, from Slipknot's Corey Taylor and Trivium's Matt Heafy to Sivert Høyem, singer with Norwegian alt-rockers Madrugada. The latter appears on the song *Coming Home*. Nergal originally asked former HIM frontman Ville Valo to appear on the track. "He liked the song and said he really wanted to do it. And then he just bailed on me."

The notion of Nergal being a kind of black-clad Pied Piper for a bunch of metal A-listers makes a strange kind of sense. He's always seemed bigger than the scene that spawned him, a product of talent, ambition and ego.

"I was pretty ego-driven, even as a young child," he concedes. "My mother would adore and worship me so much that I eventually thought, 'I'm something special.' I think I was pretty unbearable."

He was seven or eight when he got his first guitar from his father, who was a member of the Communist Party. "He stormed in the flat with it in his hands. He'd been drinking with some buddies from work. He probably won it playing cards."

He says the rebelliousness that his defined his career came early. He began wearing inverted crosses around his neck in his mid-teens, around the same time he started Behemoth – provocative behaviour in conservative, staunchly Catholic Poland. "I remember having this very emotional talk with my parents," he says. "They thought it was dangerous, that they'd made mistakes. I explained that it was humanistic for me, very individual. It's not about evil-doing to other people, it's about self-awareness and self-empowerment. I feel the same way today."

What was Adam Darski like back in the 1990s?

"If you ever find a time machine, don't go back and try to meet me."

Why not?

"I was an ass. I was always a social person, I had a lot of friends around me, but I wouldn't really count what other people would feel. I wouldn't really respect other people's emotions – how I was with my first girlfriend, how I treated my bandmates. I'm not saying I was an evil person – even a mass murderer probably has a bright side. But teenagers are stupid by their nature, and I was probably a bit more stupid than others. But I got more aware. I hope that I'm a cooler person today. And maybe objectively I'm pretty nice as well."

The enemies he's made down the years might argue with that.

"The fact that the system is repressive is not my motherfucking fault," he counters. "History has known way more extreme acts of ▶

This Is The New Shit

We asked some of Nergal's guest stars to give us a rundown of *New Man, New Songs, Same Shit, Vol. 1*

1. Run With The Devil, feat. Jørgen Munkeby (Shining NO)
Jørgen Munkeby: "Nergal asked me if I wanted to do some sax and maybe some vocals. Being a longtime fan of everything Nergal – his music, his book, his fuck-off attitude towards rules – I said, 'Hell yes, brother!' Can't wait to play this stuff live!"

2. Coming Home, feat. Siver Høyem (Madrugada)
Siver Høyem: "Nergal came to a Madrugada show in Berlin last Easter, and we stayed in touch. The question about guesting with MATM came quite quickly – he doesn't waste any time. The song is mostly his work, with some input from me on the lyrics and the bridge. I'm quite stoked to be part of the project."

3. Burning Churches, feat. Mat McNerney (Grave Pleasures)
Mat McNerney: "I was inspired by the song *Thirteen* that Glenn Danzig wrote for Johnny Cash, and Bob Dylan's *Hurricane* – songs that tell a story and feel like they have the essence of the singer in them. For me, Adam is a 'church burner', an old-school agitator, and an 'enfant terrible' who is there to stir things up, cause trouble, inspire and evoke.

4. By The River, feat. Ihsahn (Emperor)
Ihsahn: "I said, 'I've never done this type of music, so please send me the song you want me to check out, and then I can see if I can contribute something I feel is worthwhile.' I spent an afternoon recording vocals, and he was happy with it. It's a very traditional, lost soul broken love sort of thing."

5. Męstwo
Nergal: "It's the only song on the record I sing on and it's exclusively Polish. 'Męstwo' translates to manhood; in this world of judgement, prejudice and struggle, the message of the song is to remain on your own course, to stay motivated and follow your own intuition – this is what manhood represents to me."

6. Surrender, feat. Rob Caggiano (Volbeat) / Dead Soul
Rob Caggiano: "This was a no-brainer for me. *Surrender* is also an amazing tune. I love the vibe and Anders [Landelius] from Dead Soul actually has tons of real 'soul' in his voice. It grabbed me instantly. I tried to inject my own energy into the solo section, while still keeping the vibe of the song intact. I'm stoked with how it came out!"

7. Deep Down South, feat. Nicke Anderson (Entombed) / Johanna Sadonis (Lucifer)
Johanna Sadonis: "Nicke and I ran into Nergal at a festival last summer where Behemoth and [Nicke's band] The Hellacopters were playing. He asked us if we'd be interested in singing a duet for his album and how could we say no?! They had a song ready for us and we took the liberty of messing around with the lyrics. Naturally, it's a song about love and murder – it was great fun!"

8. Man Of The Cross, feat. Jerome Reuter (Rome)
Jerome Reuter: "Nergal asked me to contribute some vocals, so I said, "Only if you sing on one of mine". I showed him one of my songs I liked for him to sing, which actually, in turn, inspired him to write the music for *Man Of The Cross*. I then wrote the lyrics and we recorded the vocals. It was all very easy!"

9. You Will Be Mine, feat. Matt Heafy (Trivium)
Matt Heafy: "One year at Graspop, Paolo [Gregoletto] and I were hanging with Nergal and we all decided to fly to his hometown and hang. We were all able to connect a bit more. When I was asked by Nergal to guest, I was both honoured and blown away. I can't wait 'til the world hears this song."

10. How Come?, feat. Corey Taylor (Slipknot/Stone Sour) / Brent Hinds (Mastodon)
Rob Caggiano: "Corey sounds killer. *How Come* was a bit outside my comfort zone, and I really wanted to take it somewhere new musically when the solo comes in. I think it came out great."

11. Confession, feat. Niklas Kvarforth (Shining SE)
Nergal: "I sent Niklas a demo and suggested he change anything he felt he should... only two words from the demo version remain and happy to report, his version is way better!"

The new season of *Top Gear* has taken a weird direction

disobedience. Little Nergal from Poland is not the worst thing that's happened to rock'n'roll."

When Nergal first began talking about Me And That Man, long before he released anything under that name, he seemed to take a perverse delight in the fact that it could potentially annoy Behemoth fans. In fact, it seemed like he was almost hoping it would. "You're saying I'm a masochist?" he says, laughing.

It's not the most outlandish suggestion. He seems to relish prodding the hornet's nest and daring them to sting him. Certainly, his more controversial proclamations online and in the press seem designed to attract maximum outrage. Last year he deliberately rattled cages by posting a picture of a t-shirt emblazoned with the slogans 'Black Metal Against Antifa' and 'Kill them. Show no mercy. Fuck Antifa!' – a reference to the anti-fascist organisation that has prompted the cancellation of many shows by black metal bands with real or perceived fascist or Nazi leanings.

"When I post someone wearing an anti-antifa shirt, it doesn't make me a Nazi supporter," he wrote at the time. "I'm concerned about damage they make to the scene. The ideals are OK, but the execution of them is utterly incompetent."

The explanation did little to silence his critics. His friendship with controversial Graveland leader Rob 'Darken' Fudali – a musician who has espoused anti-Semitic and extreme right wing views – provided more ammo, as did his statements about everyone having a bit of Hitler in them.

Today, he's unrepentant about all of it. He has declared war on political correctness, and to him that's a righteous war. As he sees it, PC is an attempt to stamp out individuality, free thought and freedom of expression.

"We lost the balance years ago," he says, exasperatedly. "Everybody gets offended today. Get some fucking life, people. Imagine a movie like *Borat* coming out now, it would be fucking banned. The guy would be in court all the time. People would be offended."

This isn't accurate. *Borat* was made by a Jewish comedian, Sacha Baron Cohen, who showed up the poisonous insanity of anti-Semitism by turning a mirror on it. And anyway, isn't political correctness better than the alternative?

"Is there an alternative to political correctness?"

Yes. It's a worldview that culminates in banning immigrants from your country, or burning down synagogues.

"Don't get me wrong, I know where the world is now, and it's super-bipolar, it's completely black and white. I think that both Stalin and Hitler were assholes. Don't make me choose one

of the sides, because I think both are fucked up and wrong. I don't want to be associated with either one. But that's what people do today – they force you to either side: 'You're something to do with this guy' or 'You're something to do with that guy.' No, I'm Adam Nergal Darski, that's who I am."

Can't you see how posting an image of a t-shirt that says 'Black Metal Against Antifa' can cause problems?

"That's just blown out of proportion. You've checked my main Instagram, right? How about the countless previous posts that are pro-feminist, pro-LGBT, pro-human rights, pro-immigrants?" There's a flash of anger in his voice. "Really? Seriously? Now you're going to throw me in that

"EVEN A MASS MURDERER PROBABLY HAS A BRIGHT SIDE"

NERGAL

garbage. No. I'm not taking that, so fuck off. Read my previous posts before you pour judgement.

"One of my friends said, 'Man, you know what the problem with you is? For Polish people, you are a fucking Communist, a leftie. For German people, you are a rightie. They are way extreme, they don't see any in-betweens.' Also, the pro-gay statements – I stand behind what I say, and every time I do that I get shit. Do I care? No, I don't. Do I have a need to explain myself. No, I don't. So let's please move on."

Are you just being provocative when you share a 'Black Metal Against Antifa' shirt?

"Why not? I can do whatever the fuck I want. It's freedom of speech."

Freedom of speech doesn't mean freedom from responsibility. You've got 370,000 Instagram followers. Don't you think they're influenced by what you say and do?

"Well, I cannot take responsibility for what other people think, because I'm not other people. I'm not in their heads. Each of them has their own mind, their own emotions, their own temptations. Deal with that. Keep your own shit together. That's absolutely my total advice."

Objectively, it's hard to argue with what he says. And his Instagram feed does contain posts supportive of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as posts that could be read as pro-feminist.

At the same time, he's not always as radical as he claims. Taking aim at Antifa is hardly going out on a limb for someone who emerged from the black metal underground – actively calling out fascist or NSBM bands would be the mark of a true rebel.

But morality, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Nergal's attacks on Antifa and PC culture are underpinned by the same things that drive his attacks on the Catholic Church – freedom of thought, individuality, provocation. In his eyes, iconoclasm is part of the job.

"What I'm trying to say, especially in this overly PC world that annoys that fuck out me, is that rock'n'roll has always been about a danger factor. If you try to make it safe and friendly and 'rock'n'rollers come and fucking cuddle me', then that's not what rock'n'roll is about."

So what's the prize for him?

"Probably to piss people off," he laughs. "I'm kidding. I like how what I do resonates with the universe. I believe I bring a lot of good to the world. I pay taxes, I bring material goods. And I bring joy to a lot of humans out there. I'm aware of who I am and what I do, and I try to be smart and inspire as much as can, because I know what I do resonates. But when I'm done, when I'm no more, I don't know what happens. Then I don't really care." H

***NEW MAN, NEW SONGS, SAME SHIT, VOL. 1* IS OUT NOW VIA NAPALM**

Lamb Of God get ready to take on the world once more

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb Of God

NUCLEAR BLAST

Virginia's kings of vitriol ignite their defining moment

TIME HAS A funny way of playing tricks on us. Something we see so clearly in the present subtly shifts and warps and changes hues over time until, years later, we see that very thing in a wholly different context. In 2015, when Lamb Of God released their magnificent seventh album, *VII: Sturm Und Drang*, it was heralded as both a comeback and a show of strength. And yet today, in the shadow of their eponymously titled new album, *VII...* appears somewhat different – as a meticulously chiselled headstone marking the final days of an era. And the new record? Call it a rebirth, a coronation or just a fantastic goddamned album, but it's clear that with *Lamb Of God*, the American legends have just notched an exhilarating new high point.

LAMB OF GOD HAVE NOTCHED A NEW HIGH POINT

On their eighth studio campaign, all of those groove/death/thrash underpinnings of the classic LOG sound abound, presented in a thrilling new way that still recalls the chest-pounding brutality of 2006's *Sacrament*. Opener *Memento Mori* is a wickedly energising track that begins with Mark Morton's brooding, echo-drenched guitar line, floating like smoke around Randy Blythe's portentous vocals; think Mark Lanegan at his bleakest. Then, with his vitriolic roar of *'Wake uuuuuup!'* – it all kicks off in a firestorm of sharp, staccato riffs and the thundering chug of the band's devastating low end.

From there, *Lamb Of God* only gathers steam. *Checkmate* delivers a payload of taut, revved-up tempos, courtesy of one of the tightest rhythm sections in metal history: guitarist Willie Adler, bassist John Campbell and drummer Art Cruz, who joined the band full-time after the departure of Chris Adler. Cruz proves more than equal to the task; on *Gears* and *New Colossal Hate*, he negotiates frenetic tempo shifts with dizzying cascades of sweeping, double-kicked polyrhythms.

PRESS/TRAVIS SHINN

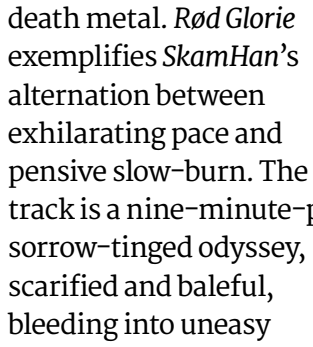
Released in the wake of Randy's arrest, trial and acquittal over manslaughter charges in the Czech Republic, *VII...* showcased a searching, introspective lyricism. Here he's fully enraged, casting his lacerating attentions upon the splintered political landscape and all of its inherent hypocrisies. In fact, he's said that "this whole record is political. There's not a single song about an individual", but Randy's increasingly broad range of styles still invest tracks like *Bloodshot Eyes* with an arresting emotional depth. Lyrically he builds on his keen ability to convert his poignant, razorwire commentary into scorching, arena-sized choruses, as on *Resurrection Man* and closer *On The Hook*.

A pair of cameos from Testament frontman Chuck Billy (*Routes*) and Hatebreed's Jamey Jasta (*Poison Dream*) dovetail perfectly into the surrounding tracks, rounding out an album that's entirely devoid of filler.

Timeless metal albums are defined by neither their extremity nor their speed; like all great music, music that spans decades is anchored in great songwriting, stupidly addictive hooks and lyrics that resonate on a cellular level. These elements permeate virtually every track here. With *Sacrament*, the band first hinted at their potential to sit amongst the most important names on the metal pantheon. With *Lamb Of God*, that promise is fulfilled.

FOR FANS OF: Corrosion Of Conformity, Slayer, Obituary

JOE DALY



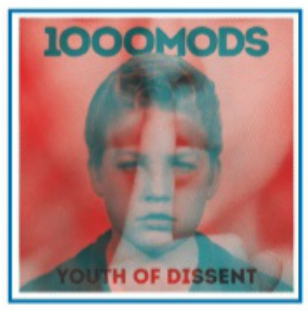
(0)
Skamhan
NAPALM

Danish extreme metallers encase progression within a sucker punch

(0)'s influences aren't as elusive as the five members' identities, incorporating sludge and post-metal within a black/death tempest. *Tyndere End Hud* is a forthright opening statement of (0)'s muscular, undulating longform brutality. *Skarntyder* is straight-up, rough-hewn death metal. *Rød Glorie* exemplifies *SkamHan*'s alternation between exhilarating pace and pensive slow-burn. The title track is a nine-minute-plus sorrow-tinged odyssey, scarified and baleful, bleeding into uneasy ambience. For the most part (0) want to beat you around the head, their progressive elements allowing variation and emotive melody to permeate their bludgeoning without really reinventing the black/death wheel.

FOR FANS OF: Enslaved, Borknagar, Bloodbath

TOM O'BOYLE



1000MODS
Youth Of Dissent
OUGA BOOGA AND THE MIGHTY OUG

Greek desert rockers find a new source of sonic irrigation

In their native Greece, these fuzz-driven desert/stoner rockers are practically a household name – their video for 2011 single *Vidage* has racked up 9 million streams – but in 2020 they are putting their faith in flannel-clad introspection. *Warped*'s grinding riff recalls Nirvana's *Bleed*, *Less Is More* has flavours of Alice In Chains, whereas *Dear Herculin* finds the sweet spot between psychedelic stoner and Soundgarden. Whether it's because they have recorded in the studio that housed Pearl Jam's *Ten* or because they've simply matured, *Youth Of Descent* not only has a grungier aesthetic but a more driven and cultivated sound. 1000mods might be well on their way to writing their own *Ten*.

FOR FANS OF: Kyuss, QOTSA, Nirvana

HOLLY WRIGHT

ABYSMAL DAWN
Phylogenesis
SEASON OF MIST

Californian death metal ensemble experience a new dawn

With only founding vocalist/guitarist Charles Elliott and bassist Eliseo Garcia surviving from 2014's acclaimed *Obsolescence*, this latest from Absymal Dawn signals a new beginning. Standout track *Hedonistic* is indicative of the group's evolution, diving into an ever-shifting sea of tidal riffage without losing any of its focus. James Coppolino's drumming expertly maintains the groove over an assault course of tempo changes while fellow new-ish recruit Vito Petroni's guitar leads sneak in an elegant melodicism. *Coerced Evolution* adopts an almost industrial approach with its staccato opening riffs and, like much of the album, it's hugely memorable. Abysmal Dawn have kickstarted a new era, and it's thrilling to witness.

FOR FANS OF: Immolation, Malevolent Creation, Death

JOSEPH STANNARD

Asking Alexandria: still seeking to expand their horizons

ASKING ALEXANDRIA

Like A House On Fire

SUMERIAN

UK metalcore mavens smooth out their years of turbulence

THERE WAS A lot riding on Asking Alexandria's previous two albums. 2016's *The Black* introduced interim frontman Denis Stoff and proved the metalcore mob could survive without ex-frontman Danny Worsnop. Then just over a year later, 2017's polarising self-titled album marked Danny's return to the fold, presenting a band reasserting and reinventing themselves in the wake of years of upheaval, with a polished, stadium-ready sound that made their mainstream intentions clear. As a result, *Like A House On Fire* feels even more consequential, the defining moment where many Asking Alexandria fans will either decide if they're still onboard or to abandon ship for good.

Anyone hoping for a return to heavier climes is going to be disappointed. On the Yorkshire quintet's sixth album, they've edged even further into pop-rock. *They Don't Want What We Want (And They Don't Care)* and *Down To Hell* aim unashamedly for the ground currently occupied by Fall Out Boy, with fat, sleazy grooves and excellent gang-chant choruses.

Antisocialist and *Take Some Time* are similarly bombastic and tailor-made for huge stages, while *The Violence* – the only track that harks back to the band's early snarling swagger – has Danny screaming over biting guitars. This is an album that will probably work best live and these are the tracks on which Asking Alexandria will undoubtedly build their future.

At 15 tracks, though, *Like A House On Fire* is a long record and the band could have done with exerting some editorial control. *All Due Respect* and *Give You Up* feel hollow and pedestrian compared to what we've seen from them before, and despite closer *Lorazepam*'s undeniable immediacy, it feels generic with prosaic musicianship that doesn't showcase the best of anyone's talents. Asking Alexandria have committed admirably to their new incarnation, but too much of *Like A House On Fire* doesn't quite nail the big finale.

FOR FANS OF: Fall Out Boy, Bring Me The Horizon, While She Sleeps

DANNII LEIVERS

ACHERONTAS

Psychic Death - The Shattering Of Perceptions

AGONIA

Greek metallers excavate black metal's most colourful outer edge

Acherontas have returned with another genre-blurring voyage into enchanted realms where modern black metal mingles freely with prog, folk and psych. On *Psychic Death...*, the band again combine lyrics drawn from ancient cultures and gothic imagery with a pulverising black metal undercarriage and the effect can be transfixing. *The Brazen Experimentalist* and *The Offering Of Hemlock* temper waves of frosty riffage with evocative melodies and unsettling harmonies. *Kiss The Blood* is a sprawling, near-eight-minute maelstrom of blastbeats, sweep picking and druggy bursts of psychedelia. The more you listen, the more you'll find.

FOR FANS OF: Blut Aus Nord, The Great Old Ones, Satan's Wrath

JOE DALY

THE ALLIGATOR WINE

Demons Of The Mind

CENTURY MEDIA

Quirky, jerky, guitar-free lunacy from the Black Forest

The Alligator Wine are an eccentric duo from the Black Forest of Germany whose retro-fuelled, reptilian rock is performed... without a guitar! And yet they manage to summon up a groove, intensity and unpredictability that ignites this full-length into a crazily thrilling magic carpet ride. Rob Vitacca (voice, organ, Moog bass and percussion) and Thomas Teufel (drums and spooky voice) cite The Doors and Led Zeppelin as inspiration, though viciously contagious rhythms, along with dollops of cheesy disco, dark creepiness and haunting, *Twin Peaks*-style introspection, prevent The Alligator Wine from sounding like some desperate, contrived throwback to the past. It's a fair bet that their live shows are a riot.

FOR FANS OF: Queens Of The Stone Age, Them Crooked Vultures, The White Stripes

DAVE LING

BÂ'A

Deus Qui Non Mentitur

OSMOSE PRODUCTIONS

Gallic black metallers find new riches along the old-school path

While black metal bands are becoming more experimental and avant-garde, there are still those who tread the orthodox path, French trio Bâ'a being a case in point. While a new outfit, their sound is that of established group of musicians and their debut is a fully realised and delicious blend of viciously spat French lyrics, doomy guitar riffs and ecclesiastical synth lines. *Procession* builds its atmosphere around a spoken-word style that echoes that of a sermon, the words gaining in power as the song moves towards *Un Bûcher Pour Piédestal* and its towering spires of sorrowful guitars and discordant vocals and an outro that festers with distinct unease.

FOR FANS OF: Behexen, Merrimack, Aosoth

CHERYL CARTER

BARISHI
Old Smoke
SEASON OF MIST

US riff wielders make a quantum leap into the progiverse

When Barishi released their debut album in 2016, few would have had lofty aspirations for the Vermont three-piece. Although *Blood From The Lion's Mouth* was a proficient sludge metal album with some enjoyable riffs, it clearly owed itself to oft-imitated forebears such as Mastodon and Neurosis. On follow-up *Old Smoke*, however, Barishi shatter all expectations with a truly adventurous offering. The band incorporate noise rock, post-metal and space-age prog into their canon. So, while the brief *The Longhunter* has the mucky riffs and blastbeats you'd expect from Conjurer, the closing title track is a crawling, mostly acoustic epic. *Entombed In Gold Forever* is the runaway highlight, though, as echoing handclaps punctuate each snare drum smack with a haunting resonance.

FOR FANS OF: **Conjurer, Mastodon, Elder**

MATT MILLS

BASALT
Silêncio Como Respiração
RITUAL PRODUCTIONS

Brazilian blackened sludge mob take no prisoners

After Ritual Productions reissued their crushing debut album last year, Brazilian doomsayers Basalt return with their first new material for the label, and have grown noticeably nastier in the interim. There's a far more prominent black metal influence here, with tracks like *Circumspice* built upon waves of harrowing tremolo and a steady blastbeat pulse. Opener *Dasein* utilises creepy, discordant ambience alongside huge sludgy riffs and galloping d-beats like a terminally depressed His Hero Is Gone, whilst *Melancolia* begins with a slow, pummelling Cult Of Luna-esque trudge before deploying a gigantic, swaggering Tom G. Warrior riff and using it as a spring-board to propel the track into fields of harsh, cold BM soundscaping. The band haven't lost sight of their doomy beginnings, however, with the closing two lengthy tracks offering waves of claustrophobic, suffocating misery.

FOR FANS OF: **Amenra, Downfall Of Gaia, Agrimonia**

KEZ WHELAN

BEAR
Propaganda
PELAGIC

Antwerp four-piece pull themselves out of the tech-metal trash heap

Belgian tech-oddballs Bear have been around the scene for around a decade now. It doesn't feel like so long ago that they were being touted as the next big thing to watch by the Tech-Fest crowd, but that momentum stalled at the tail-end of the 2010s. It takes a lot to truly stand out in a crowded scene of Meshuggah-worshippers these days, and while their fourth album isn't quite up to the level of a band like Car Bomb, it certainly sees Bear stepping up above the masses. New grasps of melody, some genuinely interesting stop-start moments, like on the superb two-minute belch of *Mite*, and a lot of space-age sonic experiments make *Propaganda* Bear's strongest collection of songs by some distance. On this evidence, Bear are smarter than the average tech-metallers.

FOR FANS OF: **Car Bomb, Meshuggah, Frontierer**

STEPHEN HILL

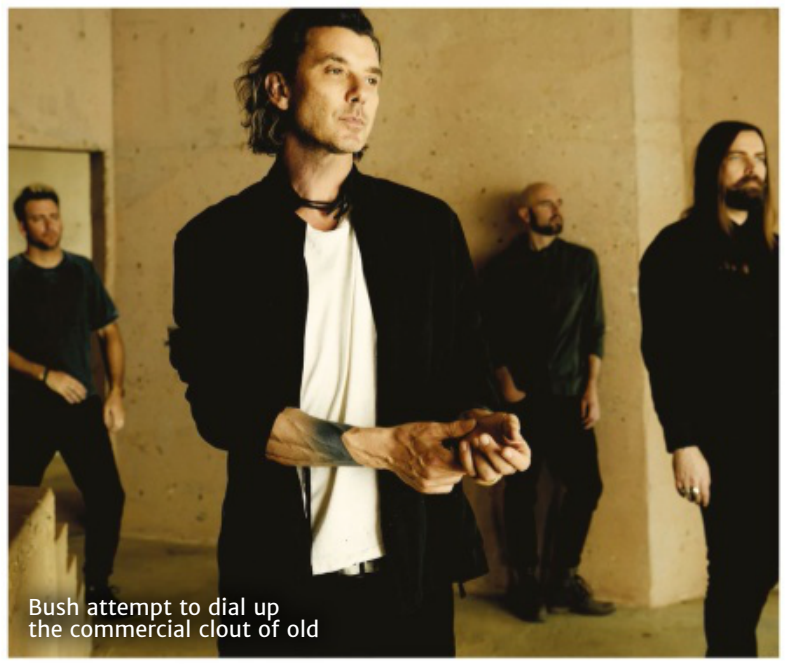
BLACKLAB
Abyss
NEW HEAVY SOUNDS

Japan's doom sorceresses sharpen up their spell book

More honed than their *Under The Strawberry Moon* debut, this follow-up from Osaka's self-proclaimed 'dark witch doom' duo sees the band in greater control of their uncanny powers. The rotten, slowly pulsing heart remains the same – shambling doom with the crumpled edges and lysergic crackle of Electric Wizard – but things have been tightened and finetuned, with purpose now holding greater sway than enthusiastic gusto. Thankfully, the individualistic elements that made Blacklab such an interesting proposition have been dragged to the fore rather than scrubbed ruthlessly away, and amid the vast, crashing riff-slabs you'll discover unexpected vocal forays and moments of lurching, near-thrash pacing. The balance is a fine one but they pull it off with aplomb, experimenting enough to accent and enhance the wild and woozy onslaught without going so far down the rabbit hole that they lose their listeners on the way.

FOR FANS OF: **Electric Wizard, Birushanah, Dead Witches**

ALEX DELLER



Bush attempt to dial up the commercial clout of old

BUSH
The Kingdom
BMG

UK's grunge rock behemoths hold on to their crown

IF YOU'RE A younger reader you might wonder why *Metal Hammer* has decided to give coverage to that bloke that was on *The Voice* a couple of years back. Simply put, 'that bloke' happens to be Gavin Rossdale, and his band are one of the most commercially successful British rock bands of the last three decades.

Bush were never the most critically acclaimed band of the grunge era… in fact, they might have been the most despised, but that doesn't mean they are devoid of any merit. However, their first two records – 1994's smash hit, *Sixteen Stone*, and its antagonistic successor, *Razorblade Suitcase*, from 1996 – have actually aged far better than many of the more lauded Seattle bands of the time. A quarter of a century on from their commercial peak, and now eight albums in, and there are more than enough reminders on *The Kingdom* of why Bush were such a big deal.

The title track sounds as good as they ever have; catchy rhythms and huge stadium-sized choruses meet head-on with dark, punchy alternative rock power to glorious effect. Only Gavin and drummer Robin Goodridge remain from the band's 90s heyday, but Bush played a blinder by adding former Helmet, Orange 9mm and Rival Schools guitarist Chris Traynor to their ranks when they reformed back at the start of the last decade. His knack for melody filtered through massive riffs are what drives this album, working excellently in tandem with Gavin's deep, gravelly tones.

Unfortunately, Bush's Achilles Heel has always been the frontman's often cringeworthy lyrics, and on *Bullet Holes* he bemoans the *'Sweat-stain in my blue suede shoes'* amongst other moments of GCSE C- poetry. It's only occasional, and it rarely detracts from the quality of the best songs here, but it can be a mild annoyance on the weaker tracks. But on the whole, Bush are on fire.

FOR FANS OF: **Quicksand, Alter Bridge, Chevelle**

STEPHEN HILL

BUSH: PRESS/DOVE SHORE

Elder: pillars of the doom/ psych community

ELDER

Omens

STICKMAN/ARMAGEDDON LABEL

Germany-based doom/psych voyagers ascend to the next level

ARRIVING JUST AS the world goes into a state of fearful lockdown, Elder make the task of self-isolation a bit easier with this labyrinthine, exploratory opus, specially crafted for solitary playback through the best headphones you can find. The five tracks here average a little over 10 minutes each, and are all charged with keenly cosmic transportive qualities, continuously shifting, warping and radiating like a Mandelbrot Set fractal display. Elder's flying carpet sometimes flutters peacefully over serene lunar seas, other times lurching dangerously over roiling supernovae.

Debuting in 2006 as a relatively orthodox stoner doom outfit, Elder gradually moved away from workaday bong-metal plod, before disappearing into the epic psych/prog black hole where *Omens* takes place, albeit a rather more blissful and chilled space than 2017's *Reflections Of A Floating World*. Truth be known, other than a few residual traces of Black Sabbath and Kyuss, there's not much of any kind of metal on *Omens*. The odd bursts of distorted guitar and hammered drums seldom last long, and are usually tempered by delicate strains of Moog, Mellotron and a rather strained clean singing voice that sometimes wanders quizzically into indie-pop/ emo-punk territory (frontman Nick DiSalvo is also responsible for guitars and synths, so vocals evidently aren't his priority).

2019's *The Gold & Silver Sessions* EP was an all-instrumental, affair, which, in the absence of any distinct prowess or major chorus – and with these vocals providing a link with the earthbound that distracts from the band's otherworldly magnificence – might be a better way for Elder to go.

It wouldn't matter if every other facet of the sound on *Omens* wasn't so beautifully judged and hypnotically seductive. Freaks, heads and trippers will be all over this album, but it's not just a big, sprawling lysergic jam, this is audibly the product of intelligence, craft, care and attention.

FOR FANS OF: Pink Floyd, Yes, Mike Oldfield

CHRIS CHANTLER

CHRONUS

Idols

LISTENABLE

Occult-laced Swedes balance the poison and the polish

Ghost's spirit hangs heavy over *Idols* but there's more to Chronus than an occult tribute act. Their melodic drive and pop-tinged spookiness is a finely crafted balancing act of commercial sensibilities and dark danger, and dancefloor vibes shimmy up close to the Devil. The layerings on The Baron's soulful croon and the flashy guitar solos are so addictive that any lack of true metal grit is forgiven. From the all-consuming major-minor earworms of *Mountains Of Madness* to the New Romantic overhaul of *My Heart Is Longing For You*, Chronus put feelings and velvet-gloved fist-pumping at the heart of this record. This is poison-laced and polished modern metal with serious groove.

FOR FANS OF: Ghost, Alter Bridge, Mastodon

HOLLY WRIGHT

CIRITH UNGOL

Forever Black

METAL BLADE

The planets align for California's epic metal legends

Debuting alongside Metallica on 1980's *Metal Massacre*, Cirith Ungol formed nearly 50 years ago in Ventura, California, but their eccentric, 70s-indebted cosmic metal and *Sword & Sorcery* obsession were viewed widely askance in the 80s thrash/glam hegemony. Even more fatally out of step with 90s trends, they split in 1992, but the weird arcane magic of early true metal masterworks *Frost And Fire* and *King Of The Dead* continued percolating in the underground, attracting new legions of acolytes with their heady authenticity and brimstone-snorting conviction. That's all still hardwired into the band on this long-awaited killer comeback. *Forever Black* is a euphoric masterclass of face-ripping epic metal, and inimitable frontman Tim Baker still sounds like Axl Rose being swallowed by an Atlantean beast.

FOR FANS OF: Manowar, Black Sabbath, Slough Feg

CHRIS CHANTLER

COLDBONES

The Cataclysm

DUNK!

South-east UK post-rockers chime with the endtimes

Coldbones' second effort couldn't be more prophetic, rising in the midst of global hysteria. Immersed in a doomed world envisioned by the Kent post-rockers, *The Cataclysm* plays out two story arcs concerning the end of the world. The abrasive *Collapse* and swelling waves through *Tide* superbly convey nature reclaiming the earth, sprinkling electric, metal-infused tones atop glittering atmospherics. It's up to *The Burning Of The Earth* to portray survivors emerging from the rubble, the morose *Ruin* and disturbing *Extinct* marking out the bleak world that remains. A compelling instrumental marvel.

FOR FANS OF: This Will Destroy You, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Maybeshewill

ALI COOPER

THE DITCH AND THE DELTA
The Ditch And The Delta
PROSTHETIC

Utah post-metal newcomers indulge in the hyper-heavy

The Ditch And The Delta's methodology revolves around mixing noise rock and post-metal with Eyehategod-style sludge. The result is as abrasive and heavy as you'd expect. Their self-titled second album takes no prisoners from the very get-go, exploding to life with whirring guitar chords and Elliot Secrist's unfettered wailing. The next 38 minutes follow in that same vein. As a result, when it comes to raw aggression, *The Ditch And The Delta* is the cream of the crop. It joyously indulges in NOLA-style mania to the point where it feels like it's trying to test you and the limits of your taste. Those who hunger for such nastiness will surely be satiated. However, those who like a bit of dynamic variety will be left dissatisfied, bar the magnificent riff that opens *Tectonic Selves*.

FOR FANS OF: Eyehategod, Melvins, Cult Of Luna

MATT MILLS

DUIVEL
Tirades Uit De Hel
VÁN

Dutch black metallers forge a debut of ice and hellfire

The Dutch BM scene is fairly small and as such many musicians can be found in several other projects. Duivel share members with a number of other Dutch bands – although they do love to keep their identities hush hush – and their rotating vocalist approach undoubtedly adds to the mystery. *Tirades Uit De Hel* is their debut full-length and has a delicious mix of raw black metal, ice-cold synth, and fiery riffs. *Schim Der Wreken* incorporates all of the above and is a bombastic start to an album that's relentless in its pace. The cascading keys of *Offerande Aan De Schimmen Der Afgestorvenen* and the unexpected segue into clean vocal lines during *Dolend Verteerd* build atmosphere around songs that speak of the Devil and hellfire, while closing track *Sluimering Van De Dood* is a twisted ode to death.

FOR FANS OF: Urfaust, Wederganger, Verwoed

CHERYL CARTER

GODEN
Beyond Darkness
SVART

Former Winter members expand their doom horizons

While unappreciated at the time, Winter's 1990 LP, *Into Darkness*, sent significant ripples through the heavy metal underground – a nuke-blasted ash mound of smothering crust-doom that stands as a singular outlier even today. Goden sees two Winter members (Stephen Flam and Tony Pinnisi) join forces with Vas Kallas (Hanzel Und Gretyl), and the trio have hewn an album that's somehow both a logical successor to Winter and its own troubling entity. The cloying atmosphere, ultra-dense riffs and queasy keyboards mediate the heaviness of yore, but the sound is more spacious and a variegated vocal approach sees gloomy spoken-word narratives offsetting the portentous doom gargles. While the oddly theatrical nature of proceedings could have gone howlingly awry, *Beyond Darkness* is a compelling and utterly convincing album – not to mention a worryingly apt soundtrack for the terrifying times we face.

FOR FANS OF: Winter, Serpentine Path, Khanate

ALEX DELLER

GREEN CARNATION
Leaves Of Yesteryear
SEASON OF MIST

Norse prog mavens return to resurrect their past and their future

In the 14 years since Green Carnation released new material, progressive sensibilities in heavy music have undergone a thrilling renaissance. The Norwegians must be due some effusive recognition, and this is precisely the album they needed to make. Diehard fans will recognise and embrace the sumptuous blend of epic heaviness and refined prog melodies, the flashes of windswept folk and the elegant use of rippling Hammond organs, but it's not hard to imagine *any* fans of modern prog succumbing to these songs. The opening title track neatly encapsulates everything that has made Green Carnation so irresistible in the past, while the extravagant sprawl of *Hounds* and a re-recorded *My Dark Recollections Of Life And Death* rival even the *Light Of Day, Day Of Darkness* masterpiece for sheer prog-powered charisma and heft. The succinct, muscular *Sentinels* and a sublime reading of Black Sabbath's *Solitude* complete a triumphant comeback.

FOR FANS OF: Katatonia, Opeth, Amorphis

DOM LAWSON

SMALL MERCIES

Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'

COLLISION
The Final Kill
HAMMERHEART

After two decades, these Dutch crossover kings present one last offering of blistering grindcore infused with muscular, Bay Area-style thrash riffs. With nary a dull moment, this is a fitting end to an impressive career.

KEZ WHELAN

DERANGE
Senses Part Two
SELF-RELEASED

In their quest to show tech-metal who's the real boss, London face-melters Derange pit frenetic chugging and brutish blastbeats against sweet melodics to conjure up an addictive and vibrantly cinematic EP.

ALI COOPER

KHEMMIS
Doomed Heavy Metal
NUCLEAR BLAST

With one colossal new tune (*Empty Throne*), two sterling covers (including a heroic take on Dio's *Rainbow In The Dark*) and three Herculean live tracks, this is more dazzling doorstop than cynical stopgap. Khemmis rule. The end.

DOM LAWSON

LILI REFRAIN
Ulu
SUBSOUND

Italian composer Lili Refrain's *Ulu* pushes her use of looping techniques on a single 22-minute track recorded live that flourishes from minimalist ritual ambience into a pealing guitar leads over stripped-down doom riffing.

TOM O'BOYLE

ROTTING OUT
Ronin'
PURE NOISE

Despite doing 18-months for transporting marijuana, Walter Delgado's unique vocals remain deliciously intact across 10 tracks and 25 minutes. The hardcore punk energy is on over-drive, and the songwriting is fun-loving and fierce.

NIK YOUNG

SXOKONDO
Flesh & Sky
DIVISION

This Swiss hardcore quartet show much more ambition than their peers while still retaining a raw edge that flaunts their Botch and Breach influences. A tantalising proposition that will hopefully yield a full-length soon.

REMFRY DEDMAN

Naglfar: still gazing into the abyss after eight years away

NAGLFAR

Cerecloth

CENTURY MEDIA

Sweden's epic black metallers return from their Odin Sleep

WHILE THIS MELODIC black metal trio are named after the infamous (and also just slightly gross) boat made entirely from the fingernails and toenails of the dead that features in Norse mythology, nowadays they have more in common with the Allfather, as Naglfar have enjoyed an Odin Sleep for the last eight years, at least as far as making records is concerned. *Cerecloth* sees these slumbering giants of the subgenre return to action with a roar, though, and they rarely pause for breath over nine tracks.

Recorded at guitarist Marcus Norman's Wolf's Lair Studio, Naglfar's seventh opus is a ferocious beast that goes straight for the jugular. Marcus's partner in axe-wielding, Andreas Nilsson, economically describes the central theme of the album – presumably with a side order of tongue in his cheek – as "the usual death and destruction" and on the whole, *Cerecloth* will certainly satisfy the hunger of many of their long-starved fans.

The opening title track is a savage scene-setter full of rapier riffs and powerful, precise percussion. The diabolically good *Horns* continues the high standards and is infused with some NWOBHM-esque flourishes, while *Like Poison For The Soul* serves as a welcome reminder of just how venomous the Swedes can be. Featuring more knock-out hooks than Tyson Fury's highlight reel, the melodic and menacing track will be nothing short of monstrous live.

Cerecloth sags a little in the middle, though. *Cry Of The Serafim* is a plodding, patience-testing misstep and the unremarkable *The Dagger In Creation* isn't much better, lacking the sharpness of some of the other cuts. The final two efforts, *Necronaut* and *Last Breath Of Yggdrasil*, ends their comeback on a huge high, however. The former features a fantastic, Judas Priest-like lead riff that's spiced with a welcome dose of doom, while the latter is a chant-, keyboard- and drone-spiced slab of epic black metal that proves the Swedes have barely missed a (blast)beat despite the lengthy gap between albums.

FOR FANS OF: Belphegor, Keep Of Kalessin, Dark Fortress

EDWIN MCFEE

GROUNDCULTURE

How Well Do You Really Know Yourself?

HOPELESS

Newcastle hardcore quintet fight their way out of the formulaic

Groundculture's first full-length displays many of the same sticky melodies, dark undertones, emotive dynamic vocals and time signatures of their spectacular self-titled debut EP. Admittedly, some elements are surprisingly radio-friendly and tracks like *Dream Like A Child* (featuring Philip Strand of Normandie) and acoustic closer *1974* are more formulaic than expected. But *RealEyes* and *Trauma Can Teach* are effortlessly catchy, the energy and snappy verses of *Blue Minds* are hugely powerful, and the frenzied yet cohesive fretwork of *Unbreakable* prove that their creative spirit remains strong.

FOR FANS OF: Beartooth, Bring Me The Horizon, Linkin Park

NIK YOUNG

HAVOK

V

CENTURY MEDIA

Denver thrashers still looting accelerant from the old school

Havok's fifth is the sound of a band weaponising their accumulated experience. Multiple layers of guitar and bass complement and battle each other in a dizzying barrage that still adheres to the standards established by their 80s thrash forebears. The straight-forward attacks of *Fear Campaign* and *Merchants Of Death* are built around savage riffs and brazen choruses, but the slow-burn *Interface With The Infinite* and *Panpsychism*'s journey through gnarled basslines, gang shouts and pulsating riffs offer more intricate assaults. Although retro-minded, Havok sound sharp and as furiously relevant as ever even as we struggle onward through difficult times.

FOR FANS OF: Exodus, Testament, Coroner

TOM O'BOYLE

HELFRÓ

Helfró

SEASON OF MIST

Another host of hellish missives from the land of ice and snow

If Icelandic black metal has been fascinating to watch in recent years, it's because the scene has produced a handful of skilled bands that approach the subgenre from different angles. Stylistically, then, Misþyrming and Svartidauði may have similar base DNA, but the communal effect of their output is noticeably distinct. Countrymen Helfró are no different. Their self-titled debut draws upon different strains of second-wave BM in effective ways, whether it be Teloch-era Mayhem, early Emperor sans symphonic bombast, the face-on-concrete claustrophobia of Satyricon circa *Rebel Extravaganza* or the Swedish-borne speed-picking melodicism at play. Listen closely and you can also hear an underlying death metal streak peering out menacingly from beneath the Icelandic funeral fog.

FOR FANS OF: Sinmara, Uada, Mephorash

DEAN BROWN

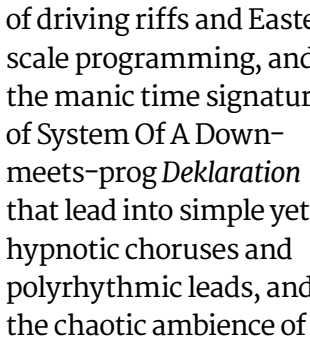
THE HIRSCH EFFEKT
Kollaps
LONGBRANCH

Freewheeling Hannover tech-heads find delirium in unpredictability

Who'd have thought a band doling out untameable prog-math compositions, and in their native German tongue, would catch on with folks on such a grand scale? Five albums in, the trio's frenzied aesthetic – drawing inspiration from classical to Dillinger Escape Plan – continues to test limits. *Kris*'s opening salvo of driving riffs and Eastern-scale programming, and the manic time signatures of System Of A Down-meets-prog *Deklaration* that lead into simple yet hypnotic choruses and polyrhythmic leads, and the chaotic ambience of the title track all surge with genre-hopping beauty. Caustic yet compelling, *Kollaps* traverses the spectrum from head-scratching complexity to scathing vitriol. If you have a penchant for the unpredictable, be prepared to get carried away.

FOR FANS OF: **The Mars Volta, Sikth, The Dillinger Escape Plan**

SOPHIE MAUGHAN



HORISONT
Sudden Death
CENTURY MEDIA

Sweden's retro-rock linchpins drill down into stunning new strata

Horisont have been living in the past pretty devotedly for more than a decade, but this sixth album is arguably the first to contain no evidence that the last 40 years ever happened. As soon as the opening jaunty piano and falsetto harmonies of *Revolution* make you check you've not accidentally pressed play on an ELO album, *Sudden Death* marks a perfect storm of earnest conviction and eccentric creative energy across each of its 52 spookily time-warped minutes. Each song turns up different avenues of 70s inspiration, from Camel-ish prog synths and Wishbone Ash-flavoured sprightly twin guitar harmonies to soul strings and sax, new wave sass and country twangs, all deployed with levels of upbeat joy, full-throttle zeal and obsessive charm that even Horisont have never hit before.

FOR FANS OF: **Witchcraft, Eddie Money, Kansas**

CHRIS CHANTLER

I AM DESTRUCTION
Nascency
UNIQUE LEADER

New breed nastiness from the Lone Star State

If there *is* a definitive line between death metal and deathcore, I Am Destruction are stomping all over it. This Texan quartet barely stray into standard 'core territory at all during their debut album; instead, this feels like a fresh, mutant strain of brutality, underpinned by the expected sonic monstrousness of a modern band but swarming with the filth and arcane fury of the old school, too. *Propagated By Abnormality* is a barnstorming opener – a viscous, unrelenting spew of atonal riffing, tempo switches and infernal shrieks. *Ruinous Phantasm* mixes feral speed-freakery with thuggish beatdowns, while *Gehenna's Beckoning* and the title track churn and grind, bridging the divide between extreme guttural slam-worship and the sinister charms of the ancient masters. Sonically barbarous and heavier than most current news bulletins, *Nascency* is one terrifying brute of a debut.

FOR FANS OF: **Dyscarnate, Suffocation, The Black Dahlia Murder**

DOM LAWSON

KING WITCH
Body Of Light
LISTENABLE

Pastoral yet epic doom from the battlegrounds of Auld Reekie

The second album from Edinburgh doom ensemble King Witch is perfect for those who keep a working wind machine in their bedroom; the impression of grand sorcery and battlefield heroics is impossible to ignore. In spite of some monstrous Candlemass-style riffing, the band occasionally sacrifice sonic heft in favour of drama and atmosphere. Much is subordinated to Laura Donnelly's immensely powerful vocals – understandable seeing as she provides King Witch's instantly identifiable signature – and there are few deviations from the windswept mountaintop mode established early on, although they stretch out (epically, natch) on *Solstice I – She Burns* and *Beyond The Black Gate*, which each clock in at more than 10 minutes. The former's intro incorporates gloriously bucolic semi-acoustics but its doleful, loping central riff slams it up against the latter for the accolade of the album's heaviest and most compelling track.

FOR FANS OF: **Grand Magus, Candlemass, Novembers Doom**

JOSEPH STANNARD

Secrets Of The Moon have embraced a new shade of black

SECRETS OF THE MOON
Black House
LUPUS LOUNGE

Germany's occult black metallers fully embrace their inner goth

AFTER 20 YEARS of occultic black metal illumination, Secrets Of The Moon summoned gothic forebears on 2015's divisive LP, *Sun*. The corpsepainted conservatives baulked at the Fields Of The Nephilim, David Bowie and Dead Can Dance influences that seeped in – their appalling lack of historical awareness of the sonic kinship between both movements obvious. Others, though, welcomed a fantastic album that was more Bauhaus than beholden to their past black metal stylings.

Half a decade later and gothic lamentations in extreme metal are more popular, thanks in part to Tribulation's mercurial rise. On *Black House*, SOTM have fully spread leathery wings to ascend, by completely immersing themselves in 1980s goth and death-rock scenes. Opener *Sanctum* rivals The Cult's anthemic sway, yet sounds contemporary by retaining a dark metallic sheen with a biting charge towards its end. The post-punk pound of *Veronica's Room* and *Earth Hour* suggest an introverted Grave Pleasures, while *Don't Look Now* presents a dead-eyed Bowie in its sinister take on new wave. *He Is Here*, *Cotard* and the instantly memorable title track form the album's fulcrum and bravely showcase epic goth balladry to rousing effect. Those three tracks, together with the downcast and often delicate *Mute God*, might send some curmudgeonly fans weeping atop of their spiked gauntlets, but SOTM have opened their sound to appeal to a vast number of music fans – and have done so without compromising their arcane ethos.

This alluring album will therefore act as an opaque gateway for open-minded metalheads to discover an alternative, all-consuming form of aphotic gloom. If there's any justice in this virus-riddled world, when the dust settles and Secrets Of The Moon get the opportunity to perform these songs live, their cult will grow as wide as the band's lofty ambitions.

FOR FANS OF: **Virgin Prunes, Tribulation, Idle Hands**

DEAN BROWN

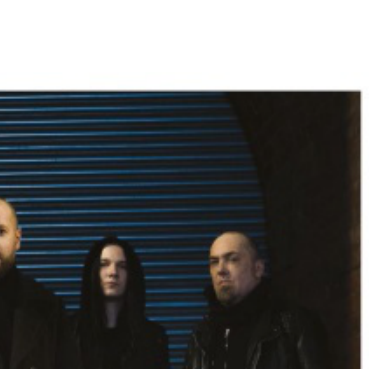
Paradise Lost: ready to break out into gothic arm-waving in one... two...

PARADISE LOST

Obsidian

NUCLEAR BLAST

The kings of misery break out the black eyeliner



OVER THE PAST 32 years, Paradise Lost have never confined themselves to one genre or mode of expression while keeping their own distinctively morose identity the entire time. Whether they're playing death metal or synth pop, the Yorkshire legends have somehow always sounded unmistakably like themselves. After 2015's *The Plague Within* and 2017's *Medusa* signalled a return to their heavier, doomier roots, it's no surprise that *Obsidian* is something of a reinvention, upping their sumptuously dark melodicism and emphasising the contrast between the band's more subtle, introspective moments and their aforementioned heavier side.

Hope Dies Young and the elegant *Ghosts*, with their glistening, sinister keys, bold yet moribund stomp and Nick Holmes' mournful baritone croon, are bona fide goth bangers, convincingly melancholy but still robust and energetic enough to knock the dust off Fields Of The Nephilim's hats. The thick, doomy flavour that informed their last few records hasn't completely dissipated, however; just check out the oppressive, forlorn closer *Ravenghast* – a prime deathly dirge complete with gruff death growls. Songs like opener *Darker Thoughts* offer the best of both worlds, contrasting sombre acoustic guitars and subtle orchestral elements with huge slabs of thick, distorted gloom. Guitarist Gregor Mackintosh is in his element here too, with his leads sounding fluid, melodic and spine-tinglingly expressive throughout.

While it might seem odd to call a record as grim and downtrodden as this a 'celebration', it certainly feels like a celebration of all the different styles and sounds Paradise Lost have experimented with throughout their career. In combining the gruesome heft of their early work with the soaring, melodic songwriting of recent years, they may just have achieved the impossible and created a record that will appeal equally to fans of every different era of their storied discography.

FOR FANS OF: My Dying Bride, Katatonia, Swallow The Sun

KEZ WHELAN

KINGSMEN

Revenge.Forgiveness.Recovery

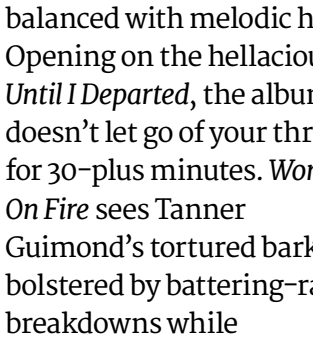
SHARPTONE

Cathartic deathcore mayhem with a vulnerable heart

Revenge.Forgiveness.Recovery is this melodic deathcore quartet's Sharptone debut, and the band have drawn strength from personal tribulations in order to deliver 10 tracks of intensity balanced with melodic heft. Opening on the hellacious *Until I Departed*, the album doesn't let go of your throat for 30-plus minutes. *World On Fire* sees Tanner Guimond's tortured barks bolstered by battering-ram breakdowns while murderous riffs keep you on tenterhooks for every ominous twist and turn of *Nightmare*. Yet amidst the chaos comes vulnerability, as stirring melodies and clean guitars smash through *Outsider*'s wall of distortion. A cathartic statement of intent, *Revenge* proves Kingsmen are ones to watch.

FOR FANS OF: Whitechapel, ExitWounds, Trivium

SOPHIE MAUGHAN



LOVIATAR

Lightless

PROSTHETIC

Existential post-metallers get elevated by emptiness

With their second full-length, Ottawa's Loviatar move away from fantastical subject matter in favour of existential meanderings inspired by bleak-minded authors such as Thomas Ligotti. Hence the exhortation to '*embrace the void*' repeated throughout *Cave In* and abject lamentations such as '*Slave to work by birth/Stripped of all our worth*' from *Horse In Thrall*. This weighty undertow suits the band's hulking – but not unmelodic – post-metal down to the ground, blending to create a convincing atmosphere of emptiness and woe. The album nears its conclusion with the brooding *All The Witches You Failed To Burn* and the 10-minute title track, both of which demonstrate Loviatar's slowburning miserablism at its finest.

FOR FANS OF: Neurosis, My Dying Bride, Torche

JOSEPH STANNARD

NYRST

Orsök

DARK ESSENCE

Icelandic black metallers combine atmosphere and oppression

The cover of Nyrst's debut album betrays their Icelandic origins before you hear a note, as lava flows from rends in the snow-covered earth. *Æðri Verur*'s insistent d-beats and cold riffing ploughs hypnotically on, softening you up for the ghoulishly theatrical vocals of frontman Snæbjörn. A mid-album interlude makes a welcome change of pace, the relentless wall of sound becoming something of a melange by the time third track *Nástirni* descends into *Athöfn*'s glowering atmospherics. It's a respite that heightens the impact of *Hvísl Hinna Holdlausu*'s break and blast introduction, a jagged downward path into horrific experimentalism, as Nyrsk drag you into their icy, haunted tomb.

FOR FANS OF: The Ruins Of Beverast, Auðn, Svartidauði

TOM O'BOYLE

PURE WRATH

The Forlorn Soldier

DEBEMUR MORTI PRODUCTIONS

The new EP sees Indonesian multi-instrumentalist Januaryo Hardy delve down the rabbit hole to create his darkest, most arresting collection of atmospheric and symphonic-laced black metal to date.

EDWIN MCFEE

WORLD SERVICE

Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe

THE EARTH BELOW

Nothing Works Vol 2: Hymns For Useless Gods

UNHERD

Waving adieu to the acoustic melancholy of his previous EP, Bangalore-based Deepak Raghu now presents sun-dappled positivity, QOTSA tones and 60s surf meditations.

HOLLY WRIGHT

ETHYL ETHER

Chrome Neon Jesus

SELF-RELEASED

Across 10 diverse tracks this Cape Town outfit mix lush stoner soundscapes and lurid lead breaks with a love of the more psychedelic end of 90s indie, recalling The Telescopes at best, James at their worst.

JONATHAN SELZER

RITUAL DICTATES
Give In To Despair
ARTOFFACT

3 Inches Of Blood and Revocation members get stuck in their murk

Featuring Justin Hagberg, one half of the vocal powerhouse behind Canada's defunct 3 Inches Of Blood, gives Ritual Dictates instant pedigree among denim-clad metal fans. But this two-piece (Revocation drummer Ash Pearson completes the line-up) features a much darker heart, albeit with a strong dose of melodic classic rock thrown in for good measure. At first, *Give In To Despair* sounds like a fairly rudimentary blackened thrash rush to the finish line, until third track *Given To Despair* (see what they did there?) and *Poisonous Proclamation* make room for some surprising moments of melody, while *Extinction*'s histrionics emphasise the fun of this project, sadly, the foundation of the record is predominantly a one-dimensional take on early 90s death metal with brief glimmers of a more diverse (and ultimately better) record trying to break through the murk.

FOR FANS OF: Kvelertak, Deicide, 3 Inches of Blood

REMFRY DEDMAN

SHRAPNEL
Palace For The Insane
CANDLELIGHT

East Anglian thrashers still nailing the 80s age of glory

Three albums in and UK thrashers Shrapnel are showing no signs of either changing or compromising their attack. If you were to think of the glory days of 80s thrash metal, this is the sound that would play in your head. Nothing wrong with that, obviously, although getting through just under an hour of it in the year 2020, when you know you've got *Pleasure To Kill*, *Rust In Peace* and *Seasons In The Abyss* sat on the shelf, might seem like a bit of an exhausting task. So, it's to Shrapnel's credit that they never lose your attention, the maniac riff that opens *The Mace* is as good as thrash can sound and *Infernal Choir* is delightfully evil sounding. If all you desire in life is more Slayer, more Exodus, more Kreator, more thrash, basically, this will hit every spot. Hard.

FOR FANS OF: Exodus, Kreator, Testament

STEPHEN HILL

THERAPHOSA
Transcendence
SEASON OF MIST

Progressive, groove-laden Gauls build up an introspective aura

Fulfilling the potential shown on their self-titled EP two years ago, this Parisian trio have woven a progressive web – teeming with blackened grooves – in the form of this full-length debut. *Transcendence* is aptly named; cranked up to a suitable volume it immediately feels like a darker exploration of the soul as vocalist Vincent Dubout goes in pursuit of catharsis. Opener *Stigmata Of The Purest Pain* builds slowly towards cacophonous release, its maelstrom of hulking riffs and unhallowed growls enriched with sprawling melodies. Clean, choir-like refrains regularly creep into the fray, primarily in the immense conclusion to brooding eight-minute opus *Mother Night* and the quieter opening to *The Legacy Of Arachne*, and an atmospheric aura that more than once descends to temper the bludgeon. It's an intense and introspective journey that's well worth taking.

FOR FANS OF: Amorphis, Wheel, Toothgrinder

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

THERAPY?
Greatest Hits (2020 Versions)
MARSHALL

Ireland's revered rockers celebrate three decades at Abbey Road

There is an alternative universe where Therapy? are being announced as Download festival headliners and filling arenas the world over. It's a universe worth visiting. Over a 30-plus year career the Northern Irish trio have gone from hardcore punk underground kids, to alt-rock's next big thing, to cult garage rock troubadours. Their always excellent back catalogue gets a furious reworking here, via a live session at the legendary Abbey Road Studios, and it's great to hear these songs having lost none of their bite and vitriol. Frontman Andy Cairns' spiteful snarl has weathered into an embittered rasp over the years, and evergreen anthems like *Screamager*, *Loose* and *Church Of Noise* are still the perfect amalgam of pop melodies and punk attitude, the aural equivalent of black bubblegum or sugary tar. Therapy? still make being unhappy sound fantastically joyous.

FOR FANS OF: Sugar, Helmet, Pixies

STEPHEN HILL

Triptykon: "I shall play this only once..."

TRIPTYKON WITH THE METROPOLE ORKEST
Requiem (Live At Roadburn 2019)
CENTURY MEDIA

One-off black metal monolith finally sees the light

MORE THAN 30 years in the making and performed for one night only at Roadburn 2019, Thomas Gabriel Fischer's *Requiem* was always destined to be a monumental piece. In a sense it's surprising that the Swiss legend has released this live recording at all, given how profoundly lost in that intangible, fleeting moment he seemed to be on the night. But here it is: the final piecing together of the audacious project bookended by cherished overture *Rex Irae* from Celtic Frost's immortal *Into The Pandemonium* album in 1987 and semi-orchestral finale, *Winter*, from their 2006 swansong, *Monotheist*.

A few initial sound issues aside, the show itself was a mesmerising and curiously joyous moment at a festival that seldom struggles for such things. Here, no doubt thanks to some judicious tweaking, *Requiem* sounds every bit as powerful and emotionally overwhelming as it should. The real meat is *Grave Eternal (Requiem, Chapter Two: Transition)*. A 32-minute funeral march, it's dense with arcane menace but thrumming with inspiration, from crushing, monotonal funeral doom to lysergic, Floydian drift, via claustrophobic musique concréte and, as you'd hope, some of the most monstrously debilitating riffs ever written. The spellbinding interjections of The Metropole Orkest render everything in a thousand shades of glittering black, nodding to skewed 20th-century classical and the scabrous spontaneity of art rock iconoclasts Art Zoyd and Univers Zero. The surges of brass and frantic sawing of strings that emerge around the 16-minute mark are alarmingly ominous and grim.

Meanwhile, whoever mixed and mastered this thing deserves a knighthood. It sounds colossal, grandiose, *significant*. Vibrant, vivid and very much alive, *Requiem* is everything the morbid maestro promised and more. It may even be his crowning achievement.

FOR FANS OF: Celtic Frost, Varaha, Shape Of Despair

DOM LAWSON

Winterfylleth: still blazing a trail for the British underground

WINTERFYLLETH

The Reckoning Dawn

CANDLELIGHT

UK black metal standard bearers raise their flag high once more

IT WASN'T LONG ago that British black metal was in a dismal state of disarray. Akercocke had sent their dapper suits permanently to the dry cleaners in 2012, and at the same time, the UK's most commercially successful black metal act, Cradle Of Filth, were in a bloated, toothless stasis. Rushing across the windswept moors, however, were bands such as A Forest Of Stars, Wodensthrone, Fen and Winterfylleth; hungry acts eager to legitimise UKBM as a scene worthy of Scandinavia and the US in the main.

Winterfylleth emerged as British torchbearers due to the keen balance of folk-infused melody and age-old ferocity at the heart of their music on a tremendous run of releases that spanned four albums between 2008 and 2014. By 2016, however, the Manchester-based band seemingly reached a creative plateau, as *The Dark Hereafter* didn't quite ripple with the same chest-beating country-pride as its four predecessors. Judging by the velocity at which they blast forth on *The Reckoning Dawn*'s exhilarating opening gambit, *Misdeeds Of Faith*, though, it appears as if the old English folk departure on 2018's autumnal *The Hallowing Of Heirdom* has rekindled their inner fire. Part four of The 'Wayfarer saga', which began on 2010's *The Mercian Sphere*, is as blustery as you'd expect, a darkly swarming sense assault. The violin-aided neo-folk stylings at the beginning of *Absolved In Fire* display a level of class above contemporaries Dawn Ray'd, while the closing *In Darkness Begotten* could stand proud as the fastest, most vicious track in Winterfylleth's arsenal to date if it wasn't for its cinematic post-rock ending.

There may be no real surprises on *The Reckoning Dawn*, nor were any required; Winterfylleth's strengths have been transcribed to stone at this stage, and it's just a rush to hear them play at full force again, as highlighted by the title track's grandiloquent pacing and arcing and how *Yielding The March Law* elicits an aura of naturalistic vastness that's worthy of Bathory.

FOR FANS OF: Ulver, Agalloch, Drudkh

DEAN BROWN

TURMION KÄTILÖT

Global Warning

NUCLEAR BLAST

Finnish industrial metallers get a wide-ranging reboot

Over the last 17 years, these industrial cyber-warriors have quietly pumped out eight albums in Finland, but after signing to Nuclear Blast, the six-piece are emerging from their metal-cased chrysalis. Hammering together a sound that borrows from the hefty sinew of Rammstein, Battle Beast's overblown Euro-metal and the harsh EDM of Front Line Assembly, album opener *Naitu* comes over like Combichrist raving at Eurovision. That exhausting pace maintained is frequently fun, culminating with the Mexican-themed *Mosquito A La Carte (To Be Continued 5)* that continues the band's tradition of switching things up on their album closer. For many listeners, this will be a mind-boggling but intriguing introduction.

FOR FANS OF: Rammstein, Battle Beast, Combichrist

DANNII LEIVERS

ULCERATE

Stare Into Death And Be Still

DEBEMUR MORTI

Auckland's arcane death metal brutes expand and destroy

Death metal simply isn't big enough to contain Ulcerate; even by their own warped standards *Stare Into Death And Be Still* feels transgressive and *beyond*. That they can marry that mastery of dissonance and technicality to songs that exert real emotional weight is nothing short of miraculous. Although not without melodic or hooky moments, assaults like *The Lifeless Advance* and *Exhale The Ash* paint grotesque, amorphous sound portraits, vocalist Paul Kelland battling through the lurching, often slow-motion melee, as unease slowly and inexorably builds. At times, it's utterly disorientating, but then Ulcerate kick into gear, unleash a blizzard of blastbeats and prove that they have the spirit of death metal in the palms of their calloused hands.

FOR FANS OF: Immolation, Imperial Triumphant, Portal

DOM LAWSON

VADER

Solitude In Madness

NUCLEAR BLAST

Deathly Polish veterans reconnect with their thrash roots

Cats may have nine lives but Vader probably have more. They've had various ups and downs in the past 37 years, but since 2016's *The Empire* they've not only reconnected with their thrash roots, but performed with utmost ferocity. At the heart of the charge is their UK drummer, James Stewart. His hyper-charged performance complements lead guitarist Spider's classic and melodic metal leanings perfectly instead of clashing with them. As a result, recorded for the first time in the UK since their 1992 debut, *The Ultimate Incantation*, and packed with mostly two-minute to-the-point juggernauts, their 12th album of originals is their best in more than a decade.

FOR FANS OF: Slayer, Possessed, Dark Angel

OLIVIER BADIN

WARBRINGER
Weapons Of Tomorrow
NAPALM

Californian thrashers look beyond the Bay Area for inspiration

Released in 2017, *Woe To The Vanquished* may have been Warbringer's best album to date, bringing in flavours beyond the usual suspects of Testament, Exodus et al. With self-explanatory opener *Firepower Kills* making its intentions known, you might expect another well-executed thrash record that combines 80s aesthetics with modern sensibilities. Indeed, *Power Unsurpassed*'s Bay Area assault and militaristic stomp, and *Crushed Beneath The Tracks*' wicked turn of pace, are some of the most gleefully gnarly thrash songs of recent memory. But *Weapons Of Tomorrow*'s strength lies in its variety, with the moody slow burn of *Defiance Of Fate* building to a majestic climax while the blackened motif of *Unraveling* morphs into full-on icy fury on *Heart Of Darkness*. Yet more atmosphere surrounds the sci-fi creepiness of *Outer Reaches* while closer *The Glorious End* revels in its fantastical narrative.

FOR FANS OF: Power Trip, Death Angel, Havok

ADAM REES

WEREWOLVES
The Dead Are Screaming
PROSTHETIC

Australian death metallers take us six feet down under

They're Werewolves, not – as the lycanthropes of *What We Do In The Shadows* would have it – swearwolves. Although the grunt of *'Fuck you!'* that burps through the bloody cyclone of *Know Your Place* immediately puts that in question. The unpretentiously brutal racket made by this Australian unit – featuring Dave Haley (Psycroptic, Ruins, King) along with Matt Wilcock and Sam Bean (both of The Berzerker and The Antichrist Imperium) – isn't genteel in the least (*Dogknotted*, anyone?) and there's little progressive or experimental to be found among their debut album's nine tracks. This isn't some cack-handed splatterfest, though; the trio's chops are evident in the precision and pace of these gory vignettes, occasionally hinting at what they could do if they lifted their minds out of the murk. But why bother when the putridity is this rich and flavourful?

FOR FANS OF: Death, Deicide, Cannibal Corpse

JOSEPH STANNARD

WITCHCRAFT
Black Metal
NUCLEAR BLAST

Sweden's proto-doom heroes narrow their horizons

In 1982, at the peak of his commercial success, Bruce Springsteen surprised everybody with *Nebraska*, a collection of rough-sounding acoustic demos where he poured out his heart in some of his most poignant material ever. If that's what Witchcraft – or in this specific case its sole member here Magnus Pelander – had in mind with this folly is unclear but then again, it's been the case with Witchcraft ever since their original line-up imploded just before the *Legend* album eight years ago. What we have here, hidden under a very misleading title, are seven songs solely performed by his echo-laden voice and one acoustic guitar. Totally detached emotionally speaking and even more minimalist than the 2016 folkish set, *Time* – although that EP was released under his own name to add to the confusion – there's very little of substance here to hang on to.

FOR FANS OF: Nick Drake, Syd Barrett, Connie Ochs

OLIVIER BADIN

WITCHSKULL
A Driftwood Cross
BIRD'S ROBE

Australian blues/doom rockers finally do 70s nostalgia right.

If there's one thing heavy music doesn't need more of, it's 1970s throwback bands. It's a niche that feels like it should have been done to death over the course of the last 30 years – yet, through the antics of bands such as Rival Sons and Scorpion Child, it continues to draw breath today. And, based on first impressions, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Witchskull belong in that same boat. However, there's a charming self-awareness to the band's newest album, adding just enough twists to the conventions of classic rock's peak. Although the era's sludgy guitars and nasally vocal performances remain, the tuning is lower and the pace faster, providing a much-needed shot in the arm. It's a rather delicious compromise between the fuzz of yesteryear and the aggression of contemporary metal.

FOR FANS OF: CKY, Iron Butterfly, Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy

MATT MILLS

RESURRECTIONS

Unearthing the latest metal reissues

Hellhammer amp it up

FANS OF STRAIGHT-DOWN-THE-LINE stoner rock will already know how reliable **DOZER** were, particularly when *In The Tail Of A Comet*, *Madre De Mios* and *Call It Conspiracy* (Heavy Psych Sounds) **[all 7]** were first released in quick succession at the turn of the millennium. Newly revived on swanky vinyl, all three albums still hit the spot. Much like fellow countrymen Lowrider, Dozer rule because they love Kyuss and Fu Manchu more than you.

Long before everyone went potty over a goofy old-school thrash revival, **WITCHERY** were ripping people's faces off in the name of speed and fury. Released the same year as The Haunted's classic debut (also featuring guitarist Jensen, the scamp!) 1998 debut, *Restless & Dead* **[8]**, is still unbeatable when it comes to vicious, blackened thrash, but both 1999's *Dead, Hot And Ready* and 2001's slightly glossier *Symphony For The Devil* **[both 7]** came pretty close. It's a sound that never gets old and Witchery remain its most brutish (and now, via Century Media, deftly remastered) guardians.

If you fancy some epic, emotionally supercharged doom, **SPIRIT ADRIFT** should already be on your radar, but just in case, remastered versions of 2017's *Curse Of Conception* and last year's *Divided By Darkness* (now licensed to Century Media for the UK and Europe) **[8]** are not to be missed. Mainman Nate Garrett's gift for angst-ridden opulence and melodic ingenuity is quite something to behold, while his riff strike-rate is ridiculous.

Ultimately, all *anyone* really needs are copies of **HELLHAMMER**'s *Apocalyptic Raids* (Noise/BMG) **[9]** and **DIAMANDA GALÁS**'s *The Litanies Of Satan* (Intravenal Sound Operations) **[9]**. The former is one of black metal's unassailable cornerstones, and remains as grim and indelible as it was when a teenage Tom G. Warrior first found an outlet for his pain. The latter is Galás's 1982 solo debut album – an absurdly intense and frequently terrifying eruption of untethered creativity, multi-octave acrobatics and a near-chewable sense of defiance. There's nothing quite like it. Faint hearts need not apply.

DOM LAWSON

LIVE EVIL

Your essential guide to the best and the biggest metal bands hitting the UK

2000 TREES FESTIVAL
AFI, CREEPER, KNOCKED LOOSE, GINGER WILDHEART, DREAM STATE, SHVPES, BLACK FUTURES, ITHACA, KNOCKED LOOSE, STAKE & MORE

JUL 9–11 CHELTENHAM Upcote Farm

AEROSMITH
JUL 15 LONDON The O2
JUL 18 MANCHESTER Arena

ARCTANGENT
OPETH, TESSERACT, SWANS, THIS WILL DESTROY YOU, LEPROUS, AMENRA, IHSAHN, PERTURBATOR, ROLO TOMASSI, CASPIAN & MORE

AUG 20–22 FERNHILL Farm

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR
DEVIN TOWNSEND, BEHEMOTH, JUDAS PRIEST, SACRED REICH, VIO-LENCE, SAXON, SKINDRED, ORANGE GOBLIN, JINJER, BURY TOMORROW, THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER, SYLOSIS & MORE

AUG 6–9 DERBYSHIRE Catton Hall

DESTRUCTION
WARBRINGER, CRISIX, DOMINATION

DEC 2 LONDON The Dome
DEC 3 MANCHESTER Academy 3
DEC 4 LIMERICK Dolan's Warehouse
DEC 5 DUBLIN Voodoo Lounge
DEC 6 GLASGOW Slay

EVANESCENCE
WITHIN TEMPTATION

SEP 2 GLASGOW SSE Hydro Arena
SEP 3 LEEDS First Direct Arena
SEP 5 BIRMINGHAM Arena
SEP 6 LONDON The O2

GRETA VAN FLEET

NOV 3 LEEDS O2 Academy
NOV 4 DUBLIN Olympia Theatre
NOV 6 GLASGOW O2 Academy
NOV 7 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy
NOV 9 LIVERPOOL Mountford Hall, Liverpool Uni
NOV 10 NOTTINGHAM Rock City

H.E.A.T.

OCT 8 LEEDS Warehouse
OCT 9 WOLVERHAMPTON KK's Steel Mill
OCT 11 SWANSEA Patti Pavilion
OCT 12 NOTTINGHAM Rescue Rooms
OCT 13 LONDON Electric Brixton

HELLOWEEN

OCT 4 MANCHESTER Academy
OCT 5 LONDON O2 Brixton Academy

I PREVAIL

AUG 26 PORTSMOUTH Pyramids
AUG 27 BRISTOL O2 Academy
AUG 31 MANCHESTER Academy
SEP 2 GLASGOW SWG3
SEP 3 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
SEP 4 LEEDS Beckett University
SEP 7 LONDON O2 Forum Kentish Town
SEP 9 DUBLIN Academy

KNOTFEST
SLIPKNOT
+ MORE TBA

AUG 22 MILTON KEYNES Bowl

LUCIFER

NOV 7 GREAT YARMOUTH Hard Rock Hell
NOV 8 LONDON Underworld

MACHINE HEAD

NOV 22 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
NOV 23 LONDON O2 Brixton Academy

NIGHTWISH

DEC 12 CARDIFF Motorpoint Arena
DEC 18 LONDON SSE Arena Wembley

OZZY OSBOURNE
JUDAS PRIEST

OCT 23 NEWCASTLE Arena
OCT 25 GLASGOW Hydro Arena
OCT 28 LONDON O2 Arena
OCT 31 BIRMINGHAM Arena

PARKWAY DRIVE
HATEBREED
CRYSTAL LAKE

NOV 19 LONDON Wembley Arena

Lucifer: bringing all the devil's best tunes to the UK in November

ROAD TRIPPIN'

LUCIFER

The international occult rockers have had to reschedule their European tour, but their message will still be heard

What's your relationship with the UK?
Johanna Sadonis (vocals): "Recently, we've only really played just London but I always love coming to London. I'm excited to come back. I'm just worried about the future, because of the whole visa situation connected to Brexit. That's going to make things a lot harder. That's why we actually moved the London show into our November tour so we don't get affected by what's going to happen at the end of the year, because it's gonna get quite pricey. And for a small band like us, that will be a problem to tour the UK."

With everything that's going on with the coronavirus pandemic, it feels like Brexit sort of slipped out of a lot of people's minds…
Johanna: "I really hope that, maybe, somebody will make it easier afterwards. For small bands, it's a horrendous fee. The visas that you have to pay, it adds up to something like 400 euros or something per person!"

Do you have any favourite songs from *Lucifer III* that you can't wait to play live on the upcoming tour?
Johanna: "I'm very excited to change up the setlist now because it's been pretty samey when you have only two albums under your belt and you're playing shows a lot. I'm excited to play *Lucifer live* and *Cemetery Eyes*, that lies close to my heart."

What has been the craziest thing you've ever seen at one of your gigs?
Johanna: "When we played Psycho Las Vegas, the last time we played on the pool stage outside and it was 43°C! We were dying on stage and people in front of us were wearing like bikinis and Speedos and stuff, and they were rocking out…"
Nicke Andersson (drums): They weren't rocking out as much as we did! Yeah, that was a bit crazy to actually play in that environment."
Johanna: "We've done all the extremes. We actually played on top of a cruise ship in the Bahamas when we were on the Kiss cruise. That was pretty surreal!"

PRESS

Black Peaks – one of Matt Hughes' bands. Show your favourite bands some love!

SUPPORT OUR BANDS!

Matt Hughes, co-director at Good As Gold PR and manager of bands such as Black Peaks and Rolo Tomassi, offers advice on how we can look after artists in the wake of Covid-19

HOLD ONTO YOUR TICKETS

"If you have concert tickets for postponed shows, hold onto them. Unless you really need that already-spent 10/15/20 quid, let the money stay with the promoter as they have most likely either spent the money either marketing and promoting a show/tour that now doesn't exist or will need that money to survive over the coming weeks/months."

BUY SOME MERCH OR MUSIC

"Look at bands' merch sites. Buy from bands direct as much as possible, and share them! Ditto using their Bandcamp sites and buying vinyl/CD/tapes from bands or your fave record shop. I've started buying a record a week from Banquet as they are so brilliant and important and wonderfully run, and also a piece of merch each week from a band's online merch store."

SUPPORT A MUSIC COMMUNITY

"Look at other aspects of this that you love and try to support in any way. Buy vouchers for future use if you can't decide on what to buy right away, or preorder gig tickets or albums coming up later in the year. If you can't do it financially, perhaps use your voice, your community and your socials to support. Podcasts, artists, designers, authors, comic books – they'll all need help love and support any way they can get it."

STREAM

"Stream away! Make playlists, share them, share the love and positivity on social media. Sign up to bands' Spotify/Amazon etc profiles, listen to their radio stations, discover new bands and artists and acts and shout about them, support them if you can and maybe even get inspired to use the time to be creative yourself."

SUPPORT FELLOW MUSICIANS

"It would be great to see bands sharing other bands' releases and music and videos and live streaming links – especially 'inactive' bands – let's make a real community of support even bigger now. This is especially important for larger bands – let your social media teams off the hook and take over for a bit to shout about other, smaller bands' music, merch, releases and streaming links/videos."

BLACK PEAKS: PRESS/ JEN MCCORD. RATM: GETTY.

Rage Against The Machine: taking the power (and their crown) back at Reading and Leeds festivals

RADAR FESTIVAL
DIRTY LOOPS, HAKEN, PLINI, CONJURER, HACKTIVIST & MORE

JUL31-AUG 1 GUILDFORD Casino

READING AND LEEDS FEST.
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE, FEVER 333, CREEPER, HO99O9, BLACK PEAKS, GALLOWS, THE BRONX, CANCER BATS & MORE

AUG 28-30 RICHFIELD Avenue/Braham Park

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
CLUTCH, LYNYRD SKYNYRD, RIVAL SONS, HAWKWIND, PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS, MONSTER TRUCK, GRAND MAGUS & MORE

JUL 17-19 MAIDSTONE Mote Park

SKINDRED

NOV 21 LONDON Roundhouse

SKUNK ANANSIE

OCT 26 GUILDFORD G Live
OCT 27 LEICESTER O2 Academy
OCT 28 FOLKSTONE Leas Cliff Hall
NOV 28 LINCOLN Engine Shed
NOV 29 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
DEC 1 GLASGOW O2 Academy
DEC 2 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy
DEC 3 LEEDS O2 Academy
DEC 5 CARDIFF University Great Hall
DEC 6 BRISTOL O2 Academy
DEC 7 MANCHESTER O2 Victoria Warehouse
DEC 9 BRIGHTON Dome
DEC 10 CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL
WHILE SHE SLEEPS, CODE ORANGE, WE CAME AS ROMANS, A, ICE NINE KILLS, STRAY FROM THE PATH, SUM 41, POLARIS, YOUNG GUNS & MORE

SEP 5 LEEDS Temple Newsam
SEP 6 HATFIELD Park

THUNDER
UGLY KID JOE

NOV 19 CARDIFF Arena
NOV 20 BIRMINGHAM Arena
NOV 21 LONDON Wembley Arena
NOV 27 GLASGOW SEC
NOV 28 LEEDS Arena

THE USED

AUG 27 BRISTOL O2 Academy
AUG 28 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
AUG 30 MANCHESTER O2 Ritz
AUG 31 LONDON O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire

W.A.S.P.

OCT 1 BRISTOL SWX
OCT 2 LONDON Kentish Town Forum
OCT 3 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
OCT 4 NEWCASTLE Academy
OCT 5 GLASGOW Academy
OCT 7 BELFAST Limelight
OCT 8 DUBLIN Academy
OCT 9 MANCHESTER Albert Hall
OCT 10 WOLVERHAMPTON KK's Steel Mill
OCT 11 LEEDS Stylus
OCT 13 NORWICH UEA
OCT 14 CARDIFF Tramshed
OCT 15 COVENTRY Empire

LIVE REVIEWS

CODE ORANGE

ROXIAN THEATRE, PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh's scene-stealing firebrands live stream their fury

Code Orange: not letting a global pandemic interfere with their plans

ON THE DAY that Code Orange released their fourth album, *Underneath*, the world went into meltdown. Both from the reaction to the record, which is already being spoken about as a metal classic, but more so from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus started to spread in earnest, whole countries were placed on lockdown, and suddenly the importance of seeing your favourite band in a room packed full of other at-risk peers shrank to insignificance for many. But, whatever the goings-on in the wider world, for many of us music is an essential release, a passion, distraction and inspiration that we simply cannot do without.

Due to this fact, at this moment, Code Orange feel more vital than ever. With the cancellation of their album release show at Pittsburgh's Roxian Theatre on March 14 doubtless being a gutting casualty, it would've been easy for the band to stay at home and mope at how momentum had been robbed from them. But that's not the Code Orange way. Instead, they decided to live stream the show on Twitch from an empty venue. It was an event that *Hammer* were never going to miss, and we weren't alone; rather than performing to the capacity of a club, the band were joined online by more than 13,000 fans, proving once again that, at present, everything they touch turns to gold.

With just 48 hours to put the stream together, it was with some shock that this feels like a full-blown live DVD recording rather than just a few iPhones pointed at the band from the mixing desk, but, again, if Code Orange are going to do something, they're going to do it right. The opening intro of *(deeperthanbefore)* just shows glimpses of the stage with images of sci-fi horror instead filling the screen, before we cut to the eerily empty venue and the band blast into the savage industrialised hardcore of *Swallowing The Rabbit Whole*.

There are two things that had been debated the most by fans upon hearing *Underneath*; how easily vocalist Jami Morgan would find the transition from behind his drum kit to stepping up to front the band, and how Code Orange could pull off the bells, whistles, bleeps, twists and turns of the new material. In both cases, it's good news. Jami throws himself around with abandon, pacing the stage and belching his guts up, and the song sounds just as tight, taut and feral as its recorded version. In fact, the only disconcerting thing is seeing Code Orange going so hard and then the camera panning to reveal an empty room. If they can summon this much energy between just the six of them, when they do get an audience they'll be decimating stages everywhere.

The new material, which the band sensibly lean on, all sounds like a step up in quality, the irresistible headbang of *Last Ones Left* and the sprawling gothic lament of *Sulphur Surrounding* being particular highlights. But it's also a night where you remember just how great all of Code Orange's back catalogue is. With the universal praise of *Underneath* still ringing in everyone's ears, you might have forgotten just how much of a banger *Bleeding In The Blur* is, guitarist Reba Meyers' clean vocals soaring anthemically. Even material from *I Am King*, such as an absolutely crushing pound through *My World*, works perfectly as a blunt clobber to the head juxtaposed with the lightning-quick, scalpel-sharp stabs of the new songs. After just shy of an hour Code Orange close with a run through the title track of *Underneath*, all electronic whirs and clicks, massive vocal hooks and muddy, grinding hardcore, and at the song's completion the stream just shuts down. No goodbyes, no thank yous, no group hugs and waves to the camera, just the very clear message that you've seen what you've come to see and now you're out. It's the approach of Code Orange in a nutshell. The one time that Jami does address those at home is just before *I Am King*, pointing the camera out to the empty venue he says, "This is what happens when the rat fucks that run this world don't care about you, they don't care about me, they don't care about anybody. They'll take and take and take, until there is nothing left."

It's a sobering reminder of why we're here, and the situation the world finds itself in. But if there is a band to rely on during these troubled and troubling times, then that band are Code Orange. It really is their world now.

STEPHEN HILL

THE SET

CODE ORANGE

(deeperthanbefore)
Swallowing The Rabbit Whole
In Fear
Spy
Intermission
Bleeding In The Blur
Who I Am
The Hunt
Last Ones Left
My World
Intermission
Cold.Metal.Place
Sulfur Surrounding
I Am King
Forever
A Sliver (Outro)
Underneath

Jami Morgan: star power

PRESS/JUSTIN BOYD

A.A. Williams journeys from isolation to salvation

A.A. WILLIAMS

PURCELL ROOM, LONDON

London's nocturnally tuned chanteuse casts a spell over the South Bank

THE EERINESS IS pervasive. A low hum. The normally thriving South Bank is, if not deserted, then quiet enough that you can sense the self-consciousness of the few souls still milling around the concrete walkways. Inside, in the bar area next to the Purcell Room, the tentative, genteel atmosphere allows you to imagine this being one of those edge-of-the-world gathering places from a Neil Gaiman story. And yet, if you're starting to experience the gradual slipping away of everything you think you knew, tonight's host offers the perfect soundtrack.

Having played with Amenra and Cult Of Luna, and with her debut EP released via Holy Roar, **A.A. WILLIAMS** is amongst a select band of artists taken to heart by the metal scene despite being a world away in sonic terms. She might have drawn comparisons to Chelsea Wolfe, and there is that starkly haunted, displaced quality to her music, but a more apt reference point would be Germany's Bohren & Der Club Of Gore – another act revered in the metal underground. The glacial pace at which it unfolds feels just below the body's own natural beat, lulling you into a nocturnal state where the minutest of details take on devastating new resonance. The lit 'A.' at the back of the stage is part 20s jazz club sign, part sole window light at 3am, and as the first notes of new song *All I Ask For* gently cascade, there's an anticipatory hush amongst the seated crowd that remains throughout the next hour as A.A.'s rich, airy yet cracked voice becomes a devotional nursing of wounds.

Whether played with a full band or on grand piano, the tracks from last year's self-titled EP lose none of their hushed, transformative power live. *Belong*'s exiled-on-Pluto torch-song swing, *Terrible Friends*' lustrous intimacy, as though slipping through limbo before dawn breaks, and the night's penultimate *Control*, with its heart-heavy lament blossoming into radiant deliverance, all become acts of aching emotional alchemy, a glimmer of light to lead us through dark times.

JONATHAN SELZER

WILLIAM DUVALL

FACEBOOK LIVE

Sitting in the living room of his Southern California home, with an acoustic guitar on his lap and a mug of tea by his side, Alice In Chains vocalist **WILLIAM DUVALL** is a long way from Dublin. He'd been scheduled to perform there this evening, before the coronavirus derailed his entire tour. Undaunted by California's quarantine, DuVall is live-streaming a set on Facebook in support of his recent solo album, *One Alone*. "It's good to see you… and it's good to be seen," he chuckles. "Welcome to the Confinement Concert!" This is as DIY as it gets – just DuVall and his guitar, running through tracks like *The Three Wishes*, *Never Fade* (an AIC cover), and other selections from *One Alone*. Separated from the bustle of a club, the set feels intimate and compelling as DuVall showcases his striking vocal range and substantial chops on guitar. The chat panel generates a scrolling ticker with hundreds of supportive messages from fans across the globe. Between songs, he gives shout-outs to fans in places like Zagreb, Buenos Aires, Paris and Helsinki. Eventually DuVall and his colleagues will be back on the road but today's mini-gig gives hope that until then, artists can still connect with fans in a meaningful and thoroughly entertaining way.

JOE DALY

ENSLAVED

USF VERFTET, BERGEN

ENSLAVED's 15th opus, *Utgard*, may have been delayed, but the fearless Norsemen intend to party on regardless by accepting the invitation to participate in the Verftet Online Music Festival, streamed around the world from their hometown of Bergen. It's as close as we're going to get to Enslaved on *Later… with Jools Holland*, with a studio a strange but ultimately fulfilling setting for the primal surges and vast reach of heroic opening one-two of *Ethica Odini* and momentous *Return To Yggdrasill*. *The Dead Stare*'s first outing in 14 years begins a trilogy from the *Below The Lights* album, with its urgent Ice Dale leads and nefarious underbelly leading to the melancholic grandeur of *The Crossing*. Arms are held aloft for the archaic chanting that welcomes and ends *Havenless* with the wash of electronics and psychedelic stomp sandwiched in between, before *Sacred Horse* adds a more improvisational air to proceedings, as well as its Eastern melodies and Hammond freak-outs. A relaxed atmosphere is underlined by the humorous exchanges between Grutle Kjellson and Ivar Bjørnson, joking with younger keyboardist Håkon Vinje about his age before heading back in time for *Isa* and the closing wrath of *Allfáðr Oðinn*. An affirming, unifying occasion.

ADAM REES

SIMON KALLAS

Turnstile find themselves on the final stretch ` of their tour

KEVIN NIXON

TURNSTILE

ULU, LONDON

Maryland's hardcore punk mob make a last stand

OUTSIDE, THERE IS a world of chaos and uncertainty, as COVID-19 begins to pose a far more serious threat to the UK than originally anticipated. Just hours before doors open, support act One Step Closer have had to cancel amid fears of a travel lockdown and the tour's dates in the Netherlands and Belgium have been postponed.

But inside London's ULU this evening, sweat drips from the ceiling as the amassed throng mosh en masse to the melodic hardcore styling's of Maryland quintet **TURNSTILE**. There's almost an unspoken acceptance in the room that tonight might be the last time that we get to enjoy communal spaces and live music for a while, and it makes the already charged atmosphere positively riotous.

Considering that Turnstile aren't due another record until the end of this year (at the earliest, maybe later given current events) this tour acts as a sort of escape from the studio, a brief sojourn to promote their soft-release EP, *Share A View* (three Turnstile songs remixed by Newcastle producer Mall Grab). Consequently, the setlist is made up of songs taken from across their entire discography. Every release gets a look-in, from 2018's triumphant second full-length *Time & Space* to 2011 debut EP *Proceed to Succeed*. It's the big songs from *Time & Space* – *Generator, I Don't Wanna Be Blind* and *Moon* in particular – that get the biggest singalongs but plenty of energy is reserved in the pit for the likes of *Fazed Out* and metal stomp riffery of *Gravity* from 2016's full-length debut *Non-Stop Feeling*.

Turnstile's short, sharp feelgood punk anthems are injected with as much of the Beastie Boys' infectious enthusiasm as they are the grit and realism of Minor Threat and provide a perfect antidote to all the uncertainty we are facing right now. Tonight is about that most undervalued commodity – escapism – and those in attendance won't forget that feeling of freedom whilst isolating in their homes in a hurry.

REMFRY DEDMAN

FIVE MINUTES WITH ANDERS FRIDEN IN FLAMES

He's steered the Gothenburg legends through three decades of ups and downs – but don't expect him to dwell on it

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

What's the worst thing about being in a band?
"If a show cancellation comes up, letting down the fans really gets to me, especially if there's nothing we can do. You can't explain to absolutely everybody and that sucks."

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
"I wasn't often in a place where people could offer advice; I had to learn a lot on my own and take a few arrows! People often tell you to stay true to yourself, and it's something I do agree with. I'd give that advice to younger bands, and to recognise the value of hard work."

When was the first time you felt like a rock star?
"There are so many different ways you can be a rock star, really. The first time we got a tourbus, our first album… those kinds of milestones felt huge, but I don't think anyone in our band has ever forgotten that it's not long before we go back to reality again!"

When was the last time you cried?
"My dad got really sick and I found out he got cancer – I cried for days. We were supposed to be in Paris doing a promo tour and that was really difficult."

Do you have anything special planned for your 30th anniversary as a band?
"We haven't ever really been a band that marked those milestones; we love our history and are proud of where we come from and what we've achieved, but we're still hungry and eager to go to places we haven't before, to do new things."

Are there any moments that make you feel like a 30-year-old band?
"With so much going on it gets really hard to keep track of time! At the start; we were just kids in Gothenburg mixing musical styles we liked together and people just happened to like it. But I don't know what I'd do without it – I'd be fucked if I was working in a factory or in a desk job!"

What's been the most surprising thing about the impact In Flames have made on the music world?
"In the beginning we were pretty removed from everything else – it took some time for genres and movements to really pick up. Now we run into bands from the other side of the world that say we helped influence them. We even tour with some, like Trivium – they say we influenced them, but I think they also turned it into something that is entirely their own. That's all we did too, you know? We took bands like Iron Maiden and German thrash/death metal bands to make our music; ultimately, that's how genres evolve."

In Flames can – and have – played venues of all sizes, from small clubs to arenas. Do you have any preference on the rooms you play?
"Growing up, when we told people we were gonna be in a heavy metal band they'd be like, 'Sure, whatever you say', so it's very cool to play to those huge rooms in Gothenburg. But we would put in just the same amount of energy and commitment if it was a room with just one guy!"

What's the craziest show you have ever played?
"We played in Mexico one time, but had a flight right after to go and tour Europe. We had to get a bus to Mexico City where we could board a plane, go home for like a day then go out again for another couple months. We ended up playing before the support band. We tried to explain to people, but they were *not* happy and our dressing room was by the stage, which meant we had to walk past a room full of really pissed people to get out and they started throwing shit and screaming at us as we were escorted out by security! Not fun, man."

In Flames have toured with everyone from Motörhead to Five Finger Death Punch. What is your favourite tour memory with another band?
"Touring the UK with Motörhead [in 2005] was truly awesome – they're a legendary band and they put us in front of a crowd who loved us. But we've also played with Megadeth, Metallica – meeting these people who you listen to, standing next to them is beyond any dream I could have had. I often have moments where I have to pinch myself!"

"THEY STARTED THROWING SHIT AT US"

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